University of Alberta

The Long Canadian Topographical Poem: 1690-1990

by

Timothy James Heath

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13 December 2002

to Rita and to my family

Abstract

The dissertation examines pre-Confederation and post-Centennial topographical long poems from and on Canada to disclose the historical, spatial, and ideological meaning in them. The study extracts four key elements from Samuel Johnson's definition of topographical poetry (genre, landscape, poetic description, and historical retrospection) to create a reading strategy that attends to the generical, spatial, referential, and historical complexity of the early poems and contemporary poems.

Most current criticism of the early poems studied in the dissertation—Henry Kelsey's "Now Reader Read . . . " (c. 1693-94) and Thomas Cary's *Abram's Plains* (1789)—finds that they fulfill the innocent and simple role of cataloguing the history, topography, and inhabitants of what was a relatively new land to the authors. At a superficial level, this observation is true, but it is an extremely limiting and dismissive one. Most critical treatment of the contemporary topographical long poems considered—Jon Whyte's *Homage, Henry Kelsey* (1981) and Robert Kroetsch's *Seed Catalogue* (1977)—is equally flawed because, in its poststructural assumptions, it overlooks the descriptive element of the poems and foregrounds

instead their putative ability to subvert genre categories, and their inability to refer to anything outside of themselves. Two critical shortcomings thus characterize the treatment of Canadian topographical poetry: early topographical long poems are seen as naively representational while contemporary topographical poetry is seen in various turns as either cynically or playfully participating in the destruction of language's ability to represent the world.

The current study engages with these analyses to show that they do not adequately display the ways in which topographical poetry performs differentiation. Topographical poetry not only differentiates the places and regions of Canada from one another, but also differentiates Canada as a nation from Britain, the United States and other countries. Thus, the topographical poem constitutes a discourse that is neither one of innocent natural description, nor one of non-referential linguistic play, but, rather a highly charged and carefully constructed rhetorical strategy that uses and produces locality to qualify, govern, advance, obscure, and expose various ideological positions. For all its ideological freight, however, the topographical poem remains a poetic effort that articulates the poet's sense of place and home.

Acknowledgments

Ian MacLaren, my supervisor, deserves special thanks for his role in helping me complete this dissertation. Ian's good humour and good sense saw me through the onerous parts of my work. His scholarly curiosity also fostered the inquisitiveness I needed to undertake this study. For the many occasions that Ian generously opened his home to me, I am truly grateful. My thanks, then, go also to Ian and Margaret, and to their children, Eli, Oliver, and Julia for sharing their time and their table with me.

Although Ian has superb editorial skills that have immeasurably improved this dissertation, he cannot be responsible for any of its remaining errors or infelicities. For these, I alone am accountable.

To my friends—Ron Cox, Mike Grogan, Chris Lock, Cam Runka, and Dave Webber—I say thank you for the meadow and for all the miles.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Chapter One: 14

Chapter Two: Part One 74

Chapter Two: Part Two 134

Chapter Three: Part One 188

Chapter Three: Part Two 278

Conclusion 364

Works Cited 374

INTRODUCTION

> It seems to me an interesting idea: that is to say, the idea that we live in the description of a place and not in the place itself, and in every vital sense we do. (Wallace Stevens 494)

> I've almost grown a portion of this place.
> (Charles Sangster 157-58)

Like nearly every literary genre, topographical poetry proves intractable to simple histories, genealogies, or definitions. However, to employ the sort of shorthand permissible during introductory remarks: topographical poetry is a descriptive literary practice that aims to represent localities, places, and landscapes in verse (Aubin vii). To make one more abridged assertion, on which more later, topographical poetry is a form that offers scenes or views in words. In this sense, then, topographical poetry is landscape poetry because of its painterly aim to express a vision, that is, an interpretive account of a tract of land.

As John Barrell points out, landscape was originally a painter's word imported to English from the Dutch in the sixteenth century to describe a pictorial representation of the countryside (1).[1] In time, it included both the pictorial countryside and a piece of countryside considered as a visual phenomenon. Both of these senses of the term refer to a tract of land and early on, in a static sense, to what can be seen in a glance. Later, and here the word becomes indistinguishable from topography in its general sense, the term came to refer to a tract of country with regard to its natural features. Concealed, however, beneath the concept of the *natural* appearance or features, is the idea and process of representation that landscape originally had.

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[1] Barrell (1-3) provides one of the most helpful etymologies of landscape.

Considerable scholarly activity has thus been undertaken to recapture the complexity of what landscape means. One of the most useful and comprehensive understandings is found in the work of Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels. They argue that landscape is a "cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings" (1). This assertion is a particularly complex one that, in its refusal to grant landscape the status of the natural, deserves very careful consideration. Even though Cosgrove and Daniels use the term "image" to refer to landscape, they underscore the fact that landscapes are material things, and that

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representation is itself concrete and occurs in a wide variety of media, "in paint on canvas, in writing on paper, in earth, stone, water and vegetation on the ground" (1). Cosgrove and Daniels equate image with substance—the painted, the written, the shaped—and thereby avoid any dichotomy between the imaginary or symbolic and the real, as well as between the conventional categories of the cultural and the natural. They argue that "a landscape park is more palpable but no more real, nor less imaginary, than a landscape painting or poem" (1). Moreover, Cosgrove and Daniels equate landscape with "surroundings" and so imply that landscape is a milieu, an environment in which one is immersed.[2]

This conception of landscape as surroundings, as that which engulfs, means also that Cosgrove and Daniels do not understand verbal or visual landscapes as copies that somehow stand outside the real place; rather, they assert that verbal, visual, and built landscapes have complex inter-relationships and that each form of representation is a constituent image of a landscape's meaning or meanings (1).

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[2] Immersion, of course, is an appropriate term to signal that the Latinate root of "surround" carries the notion of *unda* or wave and that landscape surrounds one, not just as an environment beheld, but also as a perceptual apparatus that provides the conventions of knowledge of that environment. See I.S. MacLaren, "Influence" 1-100, for a detailed discussion of the role of perception in ordering and creating the visual world, especially in relation to the media of paint and poetry.

Cosgrove and Daniels may imply, by arguing that each landscape is but a constituent part of something larger, that there exists some ideal and static idea of landscape that is total and whole. Moreover, by saying that landscape is an image, they come perilously close to reifying the paradigm of separation and observation—a strict division between subject and object—that so many critics identify as one of the key epistemological flaws of theorizing landscape.[3] If combined and carried to their logical conclusions these two possible implications suggest that landscapes are perhaps the ultimate postmodern media—a dazzling pastiche of image and symbol whose surface yields only an endless pattern of quotation which mystifies, by its natural and visual appearance, any attempt to read into the deeply layered text. The seeming ease with which one can refer to a poem and an actual landscape as "texts" only adds to the difficulty of apprehending the message and meaning of the images offered.

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[3] Mitchell, for example, argues that landscape is a "dynamic medium" that is "itself in motion" ("Introduction" 2). By quoting the words of the apostle Paul in Acts 17:28(who in turn was citing Aratus, Cleanthes, and, likely, Epimenides), "we live and move and have our being," Mitchell argues that landscape is no object from which we as subjects can remove ourselves ("Introduction 2"). Also, see Rose for a feminist critique of the "masculine subject position" that creates what she calls a false "epistemological claim" to exhaustive knowledge of

For example, an early Canadian poem like Thomas Cary's Abram's Plains, 1789, to speak as do Cosgrove and Daniels, is less tangible than the site called the Plains of Abraham. Both the poem and the place are real; however, neither the poem nor the commemorative park refer to some more authentic and truer version of the Plains of Abraham. Instead, both the poem and the park are places, that is, *topoi*, both in literature and in lived experience, which mediate important aspects of the meaning of Canada's history and Canada's present. Both sites—both topographies to be exact—uncover and obscure meaning in a variety of ways. Where Cary's Augustan couplets make his poem a difficult text for a modern reader to enter, the unusual absence of historic information or even signage in Quebec City, whose tourist economy strives to inform and accommodate, makes for no easy approach to the Plains of Abraham. If Cary's couplets can be opaque, Quebec City's ironic fulfilment of '*je me souviens*' will not allow a casual visitor to unearth this site of cultural ignominy. In place of any authentic Plains of Abraham, both the park

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landscape and geography (4).

and the poem offer themselves as palimpsests where meanings are not so much a repellent and opaque surface as they are inscriptions with many traces, erasures, and overlays of information.[4] This richness and variety of meaning, as well as the genre's relation not just to places, but also to the history of places, is one of the great rewards to a patient topographical reader.

To return, then, to Cosgrove and Daniels and the idea that landscapes are but constituents of a larger meaning: topographical poetry must be reconsidered. The representations—the city, the countryside, or wilderness—that these poems achieve are not strictly mimetic, but are, rather, a product of the nature of the discourse in which they are written. As a consequence, topographical poetry is constitutive, not simply reflective; new worlds are made out of old texts, and old worlds are the basis for new texts. Thus, Cary's Abram's Plains must be read with an eye to the eighteenth-century British tradition of topographical poetry. Conversely, Robert Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue" must be read, at least partly, as a new text generated precisely because it is a response to an old world.

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[4] This notion of palimpsest recalls the earliest Homeric sense of *graphein*, or writing, where the word meant to scratch or inscribe something.

If both of these poems may be, even provisionally, considered as topographical long poems, the questions of genre and of generic conventions become vital. Genre, however, as Terry Threadgold points out, is a concept too often understood simply as a "schema for action" or as "a recipe for producing a text" (102). Threadgold says this sort of perspective leads to a "systemic-functional" analysis of genre that participates in a narrow and inadequate view of language (105). The conceptual deficiency that Threadgold detects here is, of course, Ferdinand de Saussure's "entirely inadequate characterization of the linguistic sign as a 'bit'/particle of language (form) representing, referring to, a 'bit' of reality" (105). Threadgold thus agrees with the view advanced by Cosgrove and Daniels; that is, landscapes are always representations, and the representation is itself a real landscape, not a mere referent to some real landscape. Advancing this understanding underscores the earlier assertion that topographical poems are not mimetic; rather, these poems are constitutive. Moreover, with respect to landscape depiction John Guillory points out that topographical poems tend to function metonymically (5). That is, in its pictorial representation of a landscape, the topographical genre tends to take an element—a horizon or a prospect—and use it to depict a total pictorial view of the entire countryside or nation. Guillory quite accurately calls this metonymic compression of a locality to a textual site a *topos*, thereby neatly collocating trope and place with text and landscape. Indeed, this entwining of place and text prompts me to argue, as the following chapter will, that the term *discursive collocation* best describes the genre of topographical poetry; most important, the phrase also points toward a much-needed reading strategy for topographical poetry.

At stake here, then, is a reading method that steps beyond an understanding of genre as a structure made up of "obligatory and/or optional elements" (Threadgold 105). Rather than a structure of obligatory content, genre involves a multiple number of functions, among which "reality-maintaining and constructing processes" (106) number. As argued above, one of these maintaining and constructing operations, that is, landscape creation, is a crucial aspect of the topographical genre.

The worth of Threadgold's view of genre lies in its ability to look beneath the generalized and generic understanding of descriptive poetry as the secondary product created by a writing technique based on environmental surroundings and habitats, natural and cultivated landscapes, architecture, or specific objects and works of art. In its view of genre as a vehicle for ideology, Threadgold's model, by extension, permits a view of topographical poetry that begins with the specific geographical locale of the poem's subject, but would in its application to Canada refuse to dismiss any poem as part of the well-known fascination Canadian poets have with their so-called natural surroundings. In place of natural surroundings and their naive representation, it is necessary to inquire into the "whole web of social, political, and historical realities" that subtend the landscape composed in any given topographical poem (106). To speak of the historical realities of topographical poetry in Canada necessarily invokes the questions of which poems one would examine, from which periods, by which authors, in a study like the present inquiry.

Two periods of English-Canadian literary history have been especially rich in topographical poetry: our settler or colonial years, from the fall of Quebec in 1759 to Confederation; and the period from the 1960s through the present. Even a partial list of major poems, both early and contemporary, highlights the need for the current study. Pre-Confederation poems include "Now Reader Read . . ."

(circa 1690-93) by Henry Kelsey, Abram's Plains (1789) by Thomas Cary, Quebec Hill (1797) by J. Mackay, Canada (1806) by Cornwall Bayley, Talbot Road (1818) by Adam Hood Burwell, The Rising Village (1825) by Oliver Goldsmith, Acadia (1832-33 published 1874) by Joseph Howe, and The Emigrant (1841) by Standish O'Grady. Contemporary poems include Steveston (1974) by Daphne Marlatt, Borderlands (1975) by Don Gutteridge, "Homestead 1914" (1976) by Andrew Sugnaski, Out of Place (1977) by Eli Mandel, "Seed Catalogue" (1977) by Robert Kroetsch, Old Wives Lake (1978) by Joseph Fry, The Alternate Guide (1985) by Monty Reid, and Calgary this growing graveyard (1987) by Aritha Van Herk. To these could be added many other long poems, both early and contemporary, that expressly pursue landscape, place, and locale. These two lists point to a third, the group of poems examined in the following chapters: Henry Kelsey's "Now Reader Read . . ." (1693), Jon Whyte's Homage, Henry Kelsey (1981), Thomas Cary's Abram's Plains (1789), and Robert Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue" (1977).

As their dates of publication indicate, these texts belong to different centuries. But they also belong together, for all belong to the same "generic repertoire," and all take Canada—its land, its peoples, its institutions, and its history—as their subject (Fowler 55).

All are poetry, lengthy, and, with the possible exception of Kelsey's "Now Reader Read," all are regarded as literature. As poetry, all share a distinctive form of language; by subject, all belong to a common discourse; and, as I will explain, by form, they constitute a historically located, albeit transformative, literary kind—the long topographical poem. Moreover, each of them partipates in a web of circumstance that can only be called remarkable. Kelsey and Cary wrote well before Confederation, creating exceptionally rich landscapes of northern North America. Whyte and Kroetsch belong to Canada's postcolonial condition, yet these contemporary poets uncannily establish strong connections to and continuities with the earlier poems studied.

Juxtaposing poems from two centuries makes evident two shortcomings in the existing critical treatment of Canadian topographical poetry. Early poems are seen as naively representational, that is, as merely cataloguing the history, topography, and inhabitants of what was then a relatively new land for most writers, while contemporary loco-descriptive long poems are seen in various turns as either cynically or playfully participating in the erosion of language as a vehicle of understanding and representation. Neither of these approaches does justice to the sophistication and complexity of these poems, and neither articulates the reasons why this poetic form has had such a long and important history in Canada.

This study, then, seeks to remark and interpret topographical poetry as a discourse that, through its focus on and production of Canada as a geo-political space, registers the changing and conflicting understandings of Canada through its colonial, national, and so-called "postnational" or postmodern configurations. Since discourse refers not just to poetry, but also to the dialogue between researchers and critics, and the authors that they study, a good deal of this research must be understood as a corrective to the long habit in Canadian criticism of dismissing colonial poetry as derivative and inferior. Such work also tempers the putative sophistication of the contemporary long poem and the extravagant critical claims concerning its escape from genre, theme, narrative, and its subversion or deconstruction of the ideas of nation and place. The poems considered, then, are part of the literary and cultural history of Canada; however, they are also, quite literally, places of history, or as Cosgrove and Daniels indicate, landscapes of Canada. As such, these poems constitute a discourse from a place, Canada, on place, about place;

finally, generically, these poems form a discourse of place.

The conceptual aim of this study must be regarded as twofold: it inquires after a poetic discourse of place—topographical poetry—which is to speak of spatial representation: and, necessarily, it formulates an interpretive methodology of such a discourse. The plan of discussion undertaken to achieve this goal proceeds first, in chapter one, by examining the theoretical and practical matters at stake in establishing a reading strategy that is based on the concept of genre. These principles are then applied in chapter two which examines both Kelsey's "Now Reader Read . . ." and Whyte's Homage, Henry Kelsey. Chapter three continues this process of applying a topographical reading strategy by studying Cary's Abram's Plains and Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue." The method of placing such seemingly disparate texts alongside one another is the topic of the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER ONE

> When do language and place become identical? (Eli Mandel, Life 55)

> . . . how lifeless all history is without topography. (John Hill Burton vol 1 164)

A study that unites poems from two apparently disparate English language genres—pre-Confederation topographical poems from and on Canada and post-Centennial long poems of place—in order to disclose the historical and spatial meaning in them must begin by recognizing the importance of the topographical genre in Britain.[5] Topographical poetry flourished in Britain during the eighteenth century; the standard and still most comprehensive study, Robert Arnold Aubin's Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England (1936, rpt. 1966), lists nearly two thousand poems in its bibliographies.[6] Not surprisingly, this large corpus attracts considerable criticism.[7] Although many critics profess a certain disdain for the poetry itself, its association with British landscape aesthetics makes it a particularly rich field for investigating variously significant convergences between the literary and pictorial arts. In addition to these aesthetic studies, a number of inquiries treat the political and ideological dimensions of topographical poetry.[8] John Barrell's distinguished work, for example, traces the many connections between landscape aesthetics in topographical poetry and the extensive transformation of British landscape by agricultural capitalism (1-97). Acknowledging previous studies of the connections between painting and poetry as well as

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[5] Precise terms for poetry that pre-dates Confederation are difficult to find. Although the adjectives "settler," and the near synonym "colonial," as in 'settler writing' or 'colonial poetry,' are used in much postcolonial discourse, the terms overlook considerations of genre, and they both imply a complementary, but disagreeable term: "postcolonial" writing or poetry. Strictly speaking, the appellation "Canadian" is also inaccurate for these pre-Confederation poems. I prefer D.M.R. Bentley's habitual phrase, "early long poems on" Canada, or my own "pre-Confederation poems"; either term locates the poems in space and time, allowing also for the added generic descriptor, "topographical."

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[6] Aubin includes some American and Canadian poems; he subdivides the topographical genre into seven categories: hill, estate, town, building, region, river, and journey poems (viii). All the poems he lists were written between 1640 and 1840, the vast majority in the 1800s. See Aubin 297-391.

[7] Aubin lists over forty critical studies on topographical poetry in his "Relevant Works" bibliography (392-94). His bibliography is current only to the 1936 release of his book; however, contemporary interest in topographical poetry is sufficient to warrant my use of the present tense.

[8] Earl R. Wasserman's reading (45-88) of Sir John Denham's Cooper's Hill is exemplary in its treatment of the aesthetic and political nuances of the poem.

Barrell's work, Guillory, in a 1991 article on topographical poetry, refuses to "elaborate a history which has already been well established," implying a certain critical saturation on the subject of aesthetic and ideological matters pertinent to the genre (3). However, Guillory speaks of *British* topographical poetry; the subject of Canadian topographical poetry is nearly untouched.[9]

This lack of critical endeavour justifies further inquiry; the present study aims to add to the extant research on Canadian topographical poetry. Although I will argue, as does D.M.R. Bentley, that Canadian topographical poems are distinct from their British counterparts (Gay]Grey 131), I will not take significant issue with Samuel Johnson's definition of the form. Johnson attributes the origin of British topographical poetry to Sir John Denham's Cooper's Hill (1642).[10] In his discussion of

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[9] D.M.R. Bentley's work on early topographical poems is without parallel. However, despite the significant contributions he has made, much more remains to be done. Bentley's "Bibliocritical Afterword" is the most comprehensive essay on long poem criticism in Canada. See his remarks about the general critical neglect of early long poems (642-43).

[10] Guillory questions the oversimplification at work in attributing the origin of a genre to a single author. His quibble with Johnson overlooks the phrase "at least among

Denham, Johnson remarks,

> [h]e seems to have been, at least among us, the author of a species of composition that may be denominated *local poetry*, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape, to be poetically described, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection or incidental meditation. (50)

I cite Johnson at length because I will return many times to his definition, using its terms, "species of composition . . . some particular landscape, to be poetically described . . . by historical retrospection," as the organizing subjects of this chapter; I will, however, recast the terms somewhat, employing "genre" for "species of composition" and "referentiality" for poetical description. The other two modifications are slight: I will use "Canadian landscape" in place of "some particular landscape" and "history" instead of "historical retrospection." For the

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us" whereby Johnson implies that there is a topographical or "local" poetry tradition outside England (50). Nevertheless, Guillory cannot resist mentioning Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" (1612) as a possible earlier beginning to the form. I am grateful to Isobel Grundy for handing me Emilia Lanier's "The Description of Cookeham" (1611), an earlier topographical poem the existence of which calls for a revision of both Johnson and Guillory on purpose of creating a parallel structure, my version of Johnson's definition runs thus:

> a *genre* that may be denominated local poetry, of which the fundamental subject is some particular *Canadian landscape*, which deploys *referentiality*, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by *history* or incidental meditation.

These adjustments yield my working definition of topographical poetry: "a genre that primarily refers to Canadian landscape and history." They will also align my inquiry with relevant analytical work on these topics, which are now critical discourses in themselves.[11] In what follows, I will examine genre, literary referentiality, and history, relating each to landscape with the goal of creating a reading strategy for Canadian topographical poetry that attends to the generical, national, referential, and temporal complexity of these poems.

GENRE

In his preface, Aubin notes that the year before he submitted his doctoral dissertation on topographical poetry Hilda Taylor completed her dissertation, "Topographical

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the matter of precedence.

[11] See John Wilson Foster's "A Redefinition of Topographical Poetry" (1970) for an argument that accepts Johnson's

Poetry During the Renaissance" (1926). Taylor's work, although unpublished, is significant because she demonstrates that the topographical genre is a "Renaissance type" of writing with roots in Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance Latin poetry (2-3).[12] Significantly, even within the limits of her study—Britain, between 1545 and 1613—Taylor recognizes that any definition of the form must be "tentative and elastic" (4). She notes that topographical poetry is distinguished on the basis of substance (by which she means the description of real places), permits much variety of style, and overlaps with numerous other literary forms, "such as drama, romance, and lyric" (4).[13] Taylor also understands topographical poetry to be "intimately related to life as well as to literature" (5). Her rationale for this link lies in the connections she finds

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definition as "more comprehensive" than Aubin's (395).

[12] Both Aubin and Taylor consider Latin poetry as the chief influence and source material for topographical poetry in English. Although it lies rather outside the scope of the present study, there is much work to be done on Greek prose and poetry as influences—stylistically, intertextually, and ideologically—on topographical poetry.

[13] Taylor devotes much of her dissertation to the role of the masque and other entertainments in topographical poetry (see especially 59-128). Her focus on the dramatic quality of these poems calls into question the accuracy of Dorothy Livesay's assertion that the dramatic quality of the documentary poem distinguishes it from other poetic forms (239).

between topographical poetry and exploration:

> The great body of prose literature of travel, the most immediate expression of this activity, influenced in many ways the poetry of the age, and formed a vital part of the background of descriptive poems.[14] (5)

Taylor's work is important to the present study because, even if she does not thoroughly examine the relationship between topographical poetry and exploration, she introduces the idea that this genre is defined as much by its subject matter as by its cultural and historical context; moreover, she also suggests that an ideological impetus undergirds topographical poetry, one associated with the Renaissance thirst for knowledge of distant lands as well as with careful description of England.[15]

The association between topographical poetry and Renaissance exploration that Hilda Taylor's work just touches is amplified by Eva Germaine Rimington Taylor's

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[14] Taylor finds pageants, masques, entertainments, and humanistic writings to be the other major influences on the production of topographical poetry during the period she examines.

[15] In this connection she names Holinshed's Chronicle, Camden's Britannia, Stow's Survey of London, and Leland's Itinerary. See Richard Helgerson, Forms of Nationhood, for an analysis of chorography in Elizabethan England.

Tudor Geography 1485-1583 (1930). E.G.R. Taylor links topographical knowledge and description to ideas of empire and nation:

> Elizabeth's day saw the map and the globe as the necessary furniture of the closet of scholar, merchant, noble and adventurer alike, and dreams of Empire were formulated which found expression in Drake's achievement and Humfrey Gilbert's splendid failure. (v)

However "splendid" Gilbert's "failure" to locate the Northwest Passage, his Discourse (1576) and its case for the existence of this navigable passage long motivated British exploration in Canada. Indeed, the "dreams of empire" and Gilbert's successful voyage to the coast of North America established a British presence in what is now Newfoundland.[16] My point here is a simple one: topographical poetry, particularly in the Renaissance, marked one important response to the age's increase in geographical knowledge, and its descriptive nature makes it particularly adaptable, not only to imperial purposes, but also to the colonial processes of describing, settling, and developing a new land.[17] Moreover, there are very early examples of descriptive poetry from and on Canada, examples that either pre-date or are contemporaneous with the eighteenth-century escalation in British topographical poetry. It is this connection between descriptive writing and British expansionism that explains why Aubin's book, on topographical poetry in eighteenth-century England, lists poems such as Quebec Hill; or, Canadian Scenery: a Poem, in Two Parts (1797) by J. Mackay, "My Native Place" by John W. Scott (1809), about Nova Scotia, and "Labrador: A poetical epistle" (1785) by George Cartwright (306, 373, 369). Indeed, Johnson could explain what comprised the topographical genre in 1779, while in 1789 Thomas Cary could write his Abram's Plains, which is arguably one of the earliest Canadian topographical poems.[18] These early texts testify to a lengthy Canadian tradition of writing topographical poetry that unquestionably owes its impetus to Britain; however, even in the eighteenth century poets initiated the process of give and take whereby they began to shape the genre to suit Canada as much as they let their descriptions of Canada be shaped by the genre. That topographical poetry continued in Canada well into the nineteenth century, after its decline in British popularity, should, then, be seen as part of the development of a Canadian poetic practice, not as an arrested—because colonial—literary development.[19] Thus, in a discussion of Cary's Abram's Plains, Bentley points out the need to examine Canadian topographical poetry within its own cultural context:

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[16] Written from Newfoundland, Sir William Vaughan's The Golden Fleece (1626) is one of the first English language works of descriptive writing that owes its existence to Gilbert's voyage. Among its mixture of prose and verse, The Golden Fleece speaks of wealth and promise in Newfoundland. There are many "fleeces" named, but they can be reduced to one main trade, the Plantation and Fishing in Newfoundland. Chapter four has John Guy, Alderman of Bristow, disclose how the plantation of Newfoundland can be established and secured, despite the mists and cold vapours of the place. The sixth chapter gives panegyric accounts of Sir Francis Drake, Martin Frobisher, Henry Middleton, and Thomas Button.

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[17] Strabo, a Greek born circa 64-3 BC in Pontus, is the first recorded user of the term topography and topographer; he uses the term χώραγραφος (*chorographos* or chorographer) interchangeably with geographer to denote the person who provides geographical information and descriptions that serve the state. When he speaks of such work he unabashedly links geographical knowledge with political power:

> For the sea and the earth in which we dwell furnish theatres for action: limited, for limited actions; vast for grander deeds; but that which contains them all, and is the scene of the greatest undertakings, constitutes what we term the habitable earth; and they are the greatest generals who, subduing nations and kingdoms under one sceptre, and one political administration, have acquired dominion over land and sea. It is clear then, that geography is essential to all the transactions of the statesman, informing us, as it does, of the position of the continents, seas, and oceans of the whole habitable earth. (I.15-16)

In the next chapter I will develop these matters more fully in my discussion of Henry Kelsey's poem "Now Reader Read . . ." (1690-92), which owes its existence partly to Kelsey's own literary aspirations and partly to the commercial aspirations of the Hudson's Bay Company.

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[18] Bentley argues that Abram's Plains "warrants being described as 'Canadian poetry,' even though the term was not applied to a poem in English until 1806" (Mimic 5). His key "ingredients" of a national literature include description of local scenery, local pride, communal consciousness based on a shared past, and an educational element designed to foster local awareness leading to a

> Care must be taken here, however, to avoid thinking of such genres or sub-genres as the topographical poem and the domestic idyll as fixed and immutable, as unchanging constraints that pre-exist, as it were, in the ideal Platonic realm of England and are merely dropped like moulds onto Canadian content. (Gay]Grey 131)

Acknowledging that Canadian topographical poetry derives mainly from England, Bentley also emphasizes that Canadian poems are "unique," with "distinctive features that stem from a variety of authorial, temporal, and regional factors" (Gay]Grey 131). Bentley's concern for historical and cultural specificity is entirely appropriate for a

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shared future (5).

[19] In chapter three I will discuss the putative obsolescence of pre-Confederation topographical poetry in greater detail. Writing about the history of ideas in Canada, A.B. McKillop argues that "colonial minds must be studied not primarily as colonial, but as minds" (5). McKillop's point applies equally to literature from Canada's colonial

genre that by its very nature works to differentiate one place from another; his point also invites inquiry into the place of the topographical poem in contemporary writing and criticism.[20]

Although a handful of critics consider the topographical genre in their work on early long poems from and on Canada, it is not a category used in connection with contemporary long poems. Curiously, however, critics, theorists, and writers of contemporary Canadian long poems habitually employ terms such as place, space, landscape, baseland, hinterland, picture-space, nature, locus, local, locale, locality, map, mapping, even topography, in ways that must be called thematic, to speak of the regular and specific reference these poems make to their environmental contexts.[21] Although I can uncover no conspiracy against

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period.

[20] J. Nicholas Entrikin notes that from a strictly geographical perspective, each place is distinct simply because of its relative location (16). It follows, then, that each topographical poem works only to emphasize the uniqueness and therefore the difference of each place from every other place. An additional implication attends Entrikin's point: through "historical retrospection" topographical poems underscore the temporal individuality of each moment in history and so differentiate time from time. This genre simultaneously spaces time and times space.

[21] As an example, Smaro Kamboureli calls "locality" a "major" theme of the long poem (xiv).

using the term "topographical" to describe contemporary long poems that depict places and the history of places, unaccountably, they remain just that—*long* poems—and no other kind.[22] Indeed, "long" in connection with early and contemporary poems, if contemporary critical theory on Canadian poetry goes unquestioned, yields two meanings. In connection with older poems, the adjective is simply a dimensional term applied to lengthy poems; in reference to contemporary poems "long" refracts a variety of beliefs about a discontinuous but cumulative set of poetic techniques which renders poems only incidentally lengthy. And yet, the features that purportedly define these long poems—generic hybridity and contestation; resistance to closure; ambivalence, even animosity, toward narration; disbelief in integrative strategies; scepticism over the referential status of language; equipoise between play and purposiveness; protracted compositional time—are in full evidence throughout English, not to mention world, literary history.[23]

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[22] Dorothy Livesay's term "documentary" is an exception to this statement. I discuss her definition later.

[23] Bentley, somewhat facetiously and with a clear goal of tempering contemporary critical conceit, calls Adam Kidd's the Huron Chief (1831) "long," meaning that it is "discontinuous, disruptive, alternative" ("From the Hollow"

Balachandra Rajan, in The Form of the Unfinished (1985), considers many of these characteristics and so defines a particular type of long poem that he dubs the "unfinished." His argument is instructive, for "unfinished" does not mean incomplete. Rajan says that "the unfinished is the form of the poem as it is and not some larger form in which the poem participates and to which we are persuaded to annex it" (5). Rajan's phrase, the "form of the poem as it is," means, paradoxically, that the poem is aesthetically perfect because it does not "invite completion."[24] By arguing for the unfinished as a discrete form of long poem, Rajan effectively creates a classificatory niche in long poem criticism. Although I do not wish to celebrate what Jacques Derrida calls "taxonomic exuberance" (206), Rajan's "unfinished" helps to articulate one of the unspoken ironies that underlies criticism of the contemporary Canadian long poem. That is, nearly every commentary on the contemporary long poem declares it a formless form, a writing practice that blurs genres, transgresses them, or unfixes boundaries that conceal

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234). I am aware of no other argument that attempts to find such poetics at work in a pre-Confederation long poem.

[24] Rajan's "unfinished" is subtle. He says that even to speak of the form "is to acknowledge an addiction to paradox" (5).

domination and authority; however, in order to secure the "outlaw" status of the contemporary long poem, its marks of (non)genericity—violation, disruption, dislocation, decentering, contradiction, confrontation, multiplicity, excess, or indeterminacy—must be unblemished lest it devolve into a recognizable, or, as I argue, following Rajan's pattern, an "unfinished" or other anatomizable form.[25] These remarkable traits ironically recapitulate the inclination in Neo-classical, and arguably Modernist, genre theory to insist on purity of form, the very fallacy that contemporary long poem poetics seeks to avoid. In a similar vein, it must be asked if the contemporary commitment to poetics that are discontinuous, reader-oriented, and combinatory amounts, *de facto*, to a prescriptive, not descriptive, genre category for the long poem.[26] Ironically,

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[25] The term "outlaw" is a reference to Michael Ondaatje's poem The Collected Works of Billy the Kid (1970); Smaro Kamboureli also sub-heads a portion of her book, On the Edge of Genre: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem, "Outlawed Narrative" (184-202).

[26] Jon Whyte's unaddressed and fragmentary letter to Turnstone Press indicates an awareness of certain expectations for contemporary long poems. The context of the letter is Whyte's concern over the reception his long poem Homage, Henry Kelsey will receive. Although the date of composition cannot be ascertained, the letter was almost certainly written just before or after the release of Homage in 1981. The letter has several telling remarks:

> In the days of rustic backlash I anticipate some

Johnson's definition of topographical poetry is not a prescriptive one; it is, rather, descriptive, and suitably comprehensive for a wide variety of writing practices.

Indeed, Johnson's definition of topographical poetry encompasses Dorothy Livesay's term, "documentary," which, in 1971, she presented as a "new" poetic genre in Canada (267). In her well-known delineation of the documentary poem, Livesay takes issue with Northrop Frye's description of the longer Canadian poems as a narrative form:

> My premise is indeed that the Canadian longer poem is not truly a narrative at all—and certainly not a historical epic. It is, rather, a *documentary* poem, based on topical data but held together by descriptive, lyrical, and didactic elements. (269)

In the same paragraph, she continues,

> Moreover, our narratives reflect our environment

> bounce about its going over the same old Canadian concerns re history and such (Frank Davey will hate parts of it), which is why some of those earlier dates should be brought out. . . .
>
> The more I read of Bowering, Wah, Davey, the less I like their disdain of rhythm, classical rhetoric, puns, wit, and all that make poetry for me matter. (Papers of Jon Whyte, Box 3, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies)

> profoundly; they are subtly used to cast light on the landscape, the topography, the flora and fauna as well as on the social structure of the country. (269)

In the second citation Livesay reverts to calling "documentary" poems "narratives," but the principal characteristics of the documentary poem remain clear. It is long, topical, with descriptive, lyrical, and didactic elements, and its subjects are Canadian environment, landscape, topography, flora and fauna, as well as social structure. The parallel, indeed homology, between the two forms is clear; more to the point, Livesay's "new" genre is subsumed within the older, but strangely unmentioned, writing practice of topographical poetry.[27]

Even if Livesay's identification of a new form seems somewhat superfluous, she proceeds with few temporal boundaries, thereby encouraging a synoptic treatment of poems from widely separated historical contexts.[28] Her argument advances on a reading of Isabella Valancy Crawford's Malcolm's Katie (1884), but she also uses examples from Archibald Lampman's At the Long Sault (1943), Duncan Campbell Scott's "At Gull Lake", E.J. Pratt's The Roosevelt and the Antoine (1930), and Earle Birney's Trial of a City, ranging broadly through Canadian literary history, from Charles Heavysege up to Frank Davey's *locus* poems. The scope of my study is equally broad, moving from Henry Kelsey's "Now Reader Read . . . " (c. 1690) to Robert Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue" (1977). However, rather than presenting a new generical category, I will work in reverse, treating pre-Confederation long poems from and on Canada and post-Centennial long poems of place under the common and much older heading of topographical poetry. If the iconoclastic poetics of the contemporary long poem are

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[27] Bentley says Livesay's essay "displays a disappointingly limited knowledge of early Canadian poetry" ("Bibliocritical" 639). In all fairness, many theorists maintain that generical characteristics are partly determined by binary oppositions; for example, Richard Helgerson opposes the Elizabethan chronicle history to the chorography (used synonymously for topography), playing time off against space (132). Livesay's fiat advances in the same way, setting description against narration and documentary against epic history. Her opposition is comparable to the Elizabethan example because landscape

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description is also a spatial writing practice.

[28] Although Livesay's essay predates postmodernist Canada, her term "documentary" is applicable to recent, postmodernist poems. Frank Davey makes this same point, albeit by finding "various kinds of documentary" that are "unacknowledged" within Livesay's use of the term (36). He calls her understanding of documentary "valid today" because there "lurks" in her essay a dialectic between "poetry as scientifically true" and poetry as "oxymoronically true—as Birney, Ondaatje, and Kroetsch appear to assume" (37). See Davey's Reading Canadian Reading (1988; 123-36), in which he repeats verbatim the wording he used four years earlier, in "Countertextuality"

relinquished, "topographical" can serve as a descriptive marker, and this older term helps not merely to anatomize, but also and rather, to analyze contemporary long poems by placing on view their historical and spatial meanings. I am not arguing that all contemporary long poems are topographical. Only those poems that foreground landscape and place are topographical. By employing the category, topographical, I will, perhaps paradoxically, finally leave taxonomic vertigines behind because landscape description in these two apparently different groups of poems is as much a performative as it is a formal generic marker; my approach to genre is therefore pragmatic and heuristic because it seeks to disclose the work that Canadian topographical poems perform. This older generical description also provides a benchmark against which I will test some of the radical claims made for contemporary long poems. In particular, I examine Eli Mandel's assertion that the "the long poem cannot be a form" ("Death" 21), and Kamboureli's nearly synonymous claim that the long poem is a form but that it "turns away" from genericity, remaining "on the edge of genre" (100).

Mandel argues that "the long poem cannot be a form—its endless process resists the very definition of structure,

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(128-29).

centre, foundation we want to put upon it" ("Death" 21). Mandel's central criterion for the long poem's escape from genre is its length, which he expresses as "endless process" ("Death" 21). Although there are many objections to Mandel's idea that the sheer length of the long poem, or even its endlessness, prevents it from being categorized as a genre, the simplest comes from literary history. That is, prior to the twentieth century, long poems were something of a norm, as were unfinished, process poems.[29] Neither length nor process can be said to disqualify the contemporary long poem from its affiliations with other long poems.

Kamboureli's argument responds to and incorporates Mandel's:

> Contrary to Mandel's conclusion that "the long poem cannot be a form—its endless process resists the very definition of structure, centre, foundation we want to put upon it" (1985, 21)—it can be a form; in fact, it is a form defined by its ideological proclivity to turn away from coalescent assumptions and towards the dazzling discontinuity accompanying excess. (100)

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[29] See Rajan on the unfinished poem and its strategies of

Kamboureli's words must be sorted carefully since she seems to argue against the idea that the long poem is without form, genre-less, *but* seems to do so paradoxically, by saying it is a form that exceeds form. Moreover, because both Kamboureli and Mandel speak of the contemporary long poem as an agent, an autonomized form, that "resists" or "turns away" from definition and constraint, and because my inquiry, by constraining or framing, equates the long poem with the category of topographical poetry, it is necessary to consider the matter of generic exemplarity at some length.

Clearly, Kamboureli derives her argument from the principle that Derrida advances in his essay, "The Law of Genre" (1980). She says that the long poem resists generic categorization and so "exposes what Derrida calls 'the law of genre'" (100). Derrida argues that there are two laws of genre. The first is that "genres are not to be mixed" (204) but also that, attending this law, "lodged in the heart of the law itself," there is a second "law of impurity or principle of contamination" (204). Derrida then asks, "suppose the condition for the possibility of the law were the *a priori* of a counter-law, an axiom of impossibility that would confound its sense, order, and reason?" (204).

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deferral.

The "law of impurity" gives rise to an "essential disruption," which Derrida gamely

> let[s] you name or qualify in any way you care to: as internal division of the trait, impurity, corruption, contamination, decomposition, perversion, deformation, even cancerization, generous proliferation or degenerescence. All these disruptive "anomalies" are engendered—and this is their common law, the lot or site they share—by *repetition*. One might even say by citation or re-citation (*ré-cit*), provided that the restricted use of these two words is not a call to strict generic order. (204-05)

Derrida's point is clear: no matter what one calls a text's disruption of a generic category—"internal division of the trait, impurity, corruption, contamination, decomposition, perversion, deformation, even cancerization, *generous proliferation* or degenerescence" (204; my emphasis), or even "dazzling discontinuity accompanying excess"—by virtue of repetition and citation these textual characteristics simultaneously mark belonging and not-belonging to the genre in question.

Derrida explains that "the trait that marks membership inevitably divides" (206). Derrida's point is an elusive and complex one: belonging and not belonging all hinge on the problem of citation and the *récit*. He admits the point is subtle: the "law of abounding, of *excess*, the law of participation without membership, of contamination" is . . . "meager" and of "staggering abstractness"; moreover, "it does not particularly concern either genres, or types, or modes or any form in the strict sense of its concept" (210). Derrida continues: "I therefore do not know under what title the field or object submitted to this law should be placed. *It is perhaps the limitless field of general textuality*" (210; my emphasis). These final words point out the problem of using, as does Kamboureli, Derrida's work on genre to subvert any one particular generic category. If Derrida is at all correct, then any writing, let alone writing in a specific form, always exceeds its generic boundaries at the same time as it also fits within these same conventions.[30]

Derrida's law of genre does not treat a particular genre, but rather "genre in all genres" (203). As a result, Kamboureli's insistence that the long poem sits on the "edge of genre" is unavailing; as a generic performance, the long poem *must* be on the edge of genre, whether contemporary or ancient or Victorian, precisely because it participates in genericity itself. Derrida argues that all writing is generically transgressive; nevertheless, the task of making generic inquiries and classifications need not be a fruitless one. Terry Threadgold offers a fruitful and highly applicable explanation of this point:

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[30] It is worthwhile to note that Kamboureli's argument sounds remarkably similar to Bahktin's theory of the novel; see Manina Jones on this point (108).

> If genre, *per se*, is inadequate to describe the way we produce texts, this does not mean that what *genre* doesn't, can't, explain is anarchic, free, unconstrained. It simply means that we have not yet explored the nature of the text/context relationship enough to be able to say what precisely is predictive of the lexico-grammatical patternings and the possible meanings readers and writers make in and through texts. (122)

Threadgold, in effect, encourages more work that relates genre, or a particular genre, to its historical and specific cultural context, and on this point she draws near to Derrida's conclusion. Although Derrida sees all writing as generically transgressive, he does see the value in making generic inquiries: "What interests me is that this re-mark—ever possible for every text, for every corpus of traces—is absolutely necessary for and constitutive of what we call art, poetry, or literature. It underwrites the eruption of *techné*, which is never long in coming" (211). Derrida's reference to "re-mark," that is, the literary trait that qualifies and disqualifies a literary work's membership in or from a genre, brings me back to the *techné* of landscape description, and therefore to the social function of genre, and, in this case, specifically to the social function of the topographical poem as a package containing a commodity, Canadian landscape.[31]

LANDSCAPE

Landscape is not a simple term or concept; it is a technical and problematic word used by artists, earth scientists, architects, planners, geographers, historians, and philosophers (Meinig 1). In less technical ways, but with endless variety, the term is also employed in literary criticism. If the many disciplinary uses of landscape are combined, it can be conceived of as nature, as habitat, as artifact, as system, as an index and reflection of wealth, as ideology, as history, as locality, and also as an aesthetic (Meinig 34-47). Each of these approaches signals the interpenetration of academic disciplines; however, for landscape to be a useful term in literary studies it must be considered comprehensively. On this point, W.J.T. Mitchell offers a thorough statement:

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[31] Derrida repeatedly uses many "words of classicum" (208) such as *techné*. In the context of his essay, Derrida employs the term rather broadly, most frequently meaning "of the arts" (205). I use τέχνη, *techné*, to indicate a skill or practice (specifically, the poetic practice of landscape description), thereby stressing its Greek origin and the Greek meaning within the English term, technique.

> Landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture. It is both a represented and a presented space, both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and a simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package. (Landscape 5)

Each of Mitchell's formulations combines one very simple and one very difficult idea; put another way, he joins a discourse of the clear with one of the unclear. Indeed, one of his so-called "theses" on landscape argues that landscape works to reveal and to obscure: "Like money, landscape is a social hieroglyph that conceals the actual basis of its value. It does so by naturalizing its conventions and conventionalizing its nature" (5). Russell Brown, perhaps inadvertently, indicates just how effective, and indeed, how conventional, is this hiding in contemporary Canadian long poems and criticism on landscape:

> . . . when an American critic like Jameson

> deconstructs, what he finds at the core is ideology, and he wants to reveal the hidden ideology. When a Kroetsch or a Mandel deconstructs, what they find at the core is emptiness and absence and so on. ("Discussion" 281)

Brown's use of the indefinite article indicates that he does not refer specifically to Robert Kroetsch or Eli Mandel but to a variety of contemporary writers who produce, critique, and theorize long poems. This imbrication of writer and critic so conditions the discourse surrounding the contemporary long poem that Brown's observation must be met with a degree of scepticism about whether "absence" is found or created as a form of hieroglyph, or even, as Mitchell suggests, submitted as a naturalized convention (5). It may seem curious, in a country with so much geography, that it is possible to speak of want in landscape, or even of a lack of critical work on topographical poetry; however, I submit that this absence is but a "natural" consequence of taking the obvious for granted.

If landscape description is the primary *techné* in topographical poetry, and if that representation is one of the chief ideological works performed in this genre, then the relation of landscape description to genre must be examined. This analysis requires some care because as Ruth Helen Webb and Philip Webb point out, poetic description is deceptive since its techniques do not constellate a specifically descriptive genre: "there is in fact always another governing intention (moralizing, didactic, persuasive, emotive) which is served, rather than conditioned, by the technique of description" (288). It must be remembered that Webb and Webb are discussing descriptive poetry in general, while I am discussing certain Canadian topographical poems in detail. For this reason I speak more precisely, finding that the "governing intention" served in these poems is clear. They work exactly as Johnson suggests they do: they present a "particular landscape" from a particular point of view. In other words, they describe Canada from a variety of positions on behalf of a variety of positions, revealing and concealing selective histories as well as forming—that is, landscaping—selective contours. Encompassing this work is the idea that landscape description in these poems differentiates and distinguishes one place from another (Helgerson 135). By pointing to the phenomenal world, topographical poetry not only differentiates the places and regions of Canada from one another, but also differentiates

Canada, as a nation, from Britain, the United States, and other countries.

The differentiating particularity of topographical poetry shows itself most often in what Aubin calls the "'local pride'theme" (5). However, even when local pride grows formal and elaborate to become panegyric, topographical poets usually temper their celebration of the local with a "modesty" motif (Aubin 10). In its most stock form the modesty theme becomes the poet's apology for writing at all. The interaction between modesty and local pride produces a certain tension in the topographical genre, particularly in Canadian poetry, where writers like Whyte, Cary, and Kroetsch appear pinched between two competing impulses: their devotion to their locality (nation, even) and their uncertainty about their authority to speak, or, more to the point, to praise Canadian places that are, by definition, without high cultural standing. In Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue" this tension transforms itself into an ironic voice that simultaneously belittles and exaggerates the features of his Battle River environs. This one example of local pride will receive more discussion in the second part of chapter three where "Seed Catalogue" is treated at length. To return to the present argument, the element of local pride testifies to one more facet of topographical poetry: the idea that a poetic response to place not only shapes the landscape represented but also adumbrates the relationship between a distinct place and a distinct identity for its inhabitants.

REFERENTIALITY

Topographical poems use language to refer to real places. Indication accurately describes this type of reference. At the same time, however, these poems inevitably refer not just to places but also to other texts, most often other poems. Reference, in this last case, even if it only takes the form of allusion, is a type of citation. Topographical poetry contains and mobilizes both indication and citation—which are typically not conjoined, but kept separate, or at least contextually located—in order to fashion the basic assumptions that make either literary discourse or ordinary discourse functional modes of written communication.[32]

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[32] I am not suggesting that communication is the only function of language in general, or of topographical poetry in particular; nevertheless, the communicative and functional effects of poetry are my primary concern. In Poetry as Discourse, Anthony Easthope says that poetry is non-referential and only partially communicative (9-17). Easthope acknowledges that his view is influenced primarily by de Saussure and Derrida; moreover, he is opposed to communicative models of language, in particular that of J.L. Austin. Even though Easthope wishes to anchor poetic discourse to a specific historical and material context, he fails to explain how poetry refers outside itself. His insistence on the non-referentiality of poetry is oddly New

Topographical poetry is not unique in this regard; all writing uses a blend of referential modes to convey its message. And nothing is gained or lost in attempting to secure either the commonality or the peculiarity of topographic poetry, or any genre, because it blends modes of reference. But, as Michael Issacharoff and Anna Whiteside point out, "reference lies at the crossroads of reality and fiction, perception and interpretation being contingent on the way the referent and reference are construed," which only highlights the need to consider carefully the roles of indication and citation in topographical poetry (vii).[33]

Unlike many other literary genres or features, for example narrative and its attendant critical practice of narratology, no theoretical apparatus directly addresses the ways in which topographical poems construct landscape. It is true that work exists on the conventions of landscape

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Critical in tenor.

[33] Because I have broached the issue of the real world and the issue of textual reference, I must delimit my discussion on referentiality. Although I treat certain epistemological questions in relation to reference, I am not interested in the truth or existence, that is, the ontological status of the referent in topographical poetry. Whiteside rightly points out that these questions are problems for the logician and certain schools of semanticists (175). My concern is with the relationships obtaining between the modes of reference that reside

description.[34] It is equally true that several critics have attempted to re-define topographical poetry; however, refining the category falls short of formulating a theory or methodology for analyzing landscape in the topographical genre.[35]

J. Hillis Miller notes that two theories, or, more properly, two conditions of language operate in literary descriptions of landscape. Although this observation is strikingly obvious, it does clarify just why it is possible to have opposing claims about the ability of language to represent and present landscape. Miller associates the first condition of language with a "mimetic, referential, or 'realistic' theory of fiction" (11). Here, Miller envisages language as grounded, or rooted, and able to refer directly to places and situations outside the literary work. The second condition is what Miller calls an "uprooted" one (11). In this instance, he figures language

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together in topographical poems.

[34] This point is particularly valid for Canadian representations of landscape. See MacLaren (1983) for an extended study of eighteenth-century British landscape aesthetics as evidenced in the pictorial and narrative responses to the British North America North and West.

[35] Guillory is again noteworthy on this point because his discussion of the topographical genre broadens understanding of the topographical genre, but his analysis does not adequately unfold the complexities of landscape

as homeless and drifting, moving from one word to another, but never fixed to anything outside language. In short, Miller understands language to be either referential or self-referential, that is, to offer a different gloss, as extratextual or intertextual.

However, Miller is quick to point out that there is no purely mimetic theory of fiction; nor is there a purely self-referential one (11). In the absence of pure understandings and operations of language, two opposed orientations, Miller suggests, have a habit of turning into one another (11). The ease with which the extratextual and the intertextual blend with one another demonstrates the difficulty of formulating a congruent criticism for the topographical genre.

Miller argues that the key assumption about the "realism" of a piece of literature derives from beliefs in the referential qualities of language. In short, it is understood that the landscape of a particular region is really "there" and that language simply points at and refers to it (19). While Miller predictably illustrates this point through canonical fiction, the Dorset country of Thomas Hardy's novels or the Mississippi country in William Faulkner's stories, I consider other works, for instance,

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representation in this poetic form.

the Sorel environs of Standish O'Grady's The Emigrant (1841). Other possible examples exist, for instance, in the British Columbian cannery town of Steveston in Daphne Marlatt's poem of the same name (1974). Indeed, the latter example shows an assumed link between toponyms, or place names, topographical realism, and, finally, the overall accuracy of a poem. Steveston, in the ordinary view of language, is a sign that promises some access to the unique place behind it. Quite literally, the referent is the town that W.H. and Manoah Steves set out to build on the Fraser River. The same notions of correspondence and referentiality are operative in Thomas Cary's poem, Abram's Plains, and the place called the Plains of Abraham. Miller argues that a species of Cratylism makes place names seem intrinsic to the locations they name (4). Indeed, Miller says that place names tell "what the places are like," and that the "place is carried into the name and becomes available to us there" (4). Miller is referring to an assumption that he calls "false," but we nevertheless perform it daily in our "personal, social, and political" lives (3).

To focus on the latter example: either name, The Plains of Abraham or Abram's Plains, is densely metonymic and richly allusive; each refers to the actual site once south of Quebec City, owned by Abraham Martin between 1635 and 1645, and each refers to the decisive battle fought on 12 September 1759 between the French and English in the North American arena of the Seven Years War. Both the owner's name and the historical significance of the military victory at that site work together to add further layers of significance. Cary's use of Abram rather than Abraham, suggests that the English victory over the French somehow recalls the nodal moment in ancient Israel's history when Yahweh entered into covenant with Abram.[36] There is a typology at work in the name and the poem that sees the new beginning for the English in Quebec as a form of fulfilment, or at least as a definitive step, in sacred, mythic, and political history. Seen from a Francophone perspective, the place symbolizes defeat and a loss of cultural sovereignty, as forcefully as, from an Anglophone perspective, it symbolizes a justification and *raison d'être* for asserting control over Quebec. And yet the placard mounted by Parks Canada outside the Musée du Quebec at the Plains of Abraham speaks today only of Abraham Martin, the establishment of Quebec's first horse racing course at the site in 1767, the creation of a public park at the battlefield in 1901, the celebration of Quebec City's tricentennial there in 1908, Charles Lindbergh's visit to Quebec in 1928 when he landed at the Plains of Abraham, and the staging of the 1938 Eucharistic congress there, which included "fifty-five bishops and archbishops as well as 2,500 priests," and an "altar forty metres high" (Parks Canada).[37] If Parks Canada works to efface the mythic and political associations by conveying only the incidental information about the site, a larger meaning looms in a revealing *non sequitur*—the notice that in 1908 the Plains of Abraham became the first parcel of land incorporated into National Battlefields Park.[38]

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[36] Bentley suggests that Cary may have chosen Abram over Abraham because it more closely conforms to the prosodic conventions of iambic pentameter ("Introduction" 26). See

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Genesis 17:1-8 for the covenantal renaming of Abram.

[37] The information cited is current at least to 2001.

[38] The poem Abram's Plains and the site known as the Plains of Abraham are bound together in what Derrida calls a *monumémoire* or a "monumemory" that constitutes a whole storehouse of information. The term is a portmanteau word coined in Glas to designate a *monument à la mémoire*, a monument in memory of someone or something (Cited by Jean-Jacques Thomas in Whiteside and Issacharoff 58). Entrikin's discussion on the significance of the name "Chernobyl" is relevant here; he argues that place names and our experiences with places are akin to what he calls "mythic thought." That is, mythic thought connects events to their locations and only weakly differentiates between subjective experience and objective fact (10). The Parks Canada placard at the Plains of Abraham makes no mention of Aboriginal presence at the site. The very name of the government agency, "Parks Canada," functions similarly, "as

The second half of the title of Cary's poem, Abram's Plains: A Poem, foregrounds the difficulty of separating landscape as a real world referent from a textual, fictional one; at the same time, however, it raises the problematic question of how these two forms of landscape re-presentation are related to one another. The fact that there is a battlefield outside the Musée du Quebec, that it can be visited, photographed, and walked on also permits it to be transposed into a place of the mind or a place of poetry (Miller 19). Concerning this act of transposition, Miller argues that the text of literature and the landscaped site may be thought of as "elements in a series" (19). That is, "the actual landscape exists not only in itself but as if it has already been transposed into photographs or maps" (19). Continuing in the series, "the real maps," Miller notes, "are in turn remapped in the texts of the novels that are 'based on' those scenes and on the psycho-socio-economic realities of ways of life there—modes of transportation, agriculture, kinds of houses, roads, paths, walls, marriage customs, kinship systems, the annual round of observances" (19).[39] This act of remapping

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both a *monumémoire* and as a structure of "mythic thought," vis à vis the lands that are under their jurisdiction.

[39] This last list of "realities" might easily be taken as a

constitutes the novel, or, as I argue, the poem, into a figurative map.

However, there is one more element in the series that Miller envisages. The chain begins with a real ground or landscape, and then progresses to a literary and figurative map, but the final elements of the series are the maps created on the basis of the literary work.[40] Miller argues that such a map "may seem to show what is presupposed by the action of the novel, but in fact it is the product of the novel and impossible without it" (20). Because there is an assumed causal link that follows a strict temporal order, it is necessary to cite Miller at length:

> The series is a relatively complex example of the logic or alogic of text and context, figure and ground, work and "hors d'oeuvre." This series is a chain, a reversible concatenation. Any link may be placed at any point in the sequence. Any link presupposes the others as its determining

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catalogue of the items that animate poems like Marlatt's Steveston or O'Grady's The Emigrant.

[40] Miller argues that this last element in the series is most clearly achieved in novels that obey the unities of place. However, it may also be seen in the maps that are drawn to depict the travels of Henry Kelsey in 1690-92, where the sources of cartographic detail are Kelsey's poem "Now Reader Read" and his accompanying journals. Chapter two will treat Kelsey's poem and landscape.

> causes, but in its turn is cause of the others. The landscape is not a pre-existing thing in itself. (20-21)

Some of the ambiguity of this elliptical passage is clarified in a later passage:

> According to the alogic of figure and ground relations, the landscape around, behind, or beneath the novel must both pre-exist the novel as what is outside it, prior to it, giving solidity, and be incorporated within it. The landscape exists as landscape only when it has been made human in an activity of inhabitation that the writing of the novel repeats or prolongs. Causer and caused, first and second, change places in a perpetually reversing metalepsis. *If the landscape is not prior to the novel and outside it, then it cannot be an extratextual ground giving the novel referential reality. If it is not part of the novel, in some way inside it as well as outside, then it is irrelevant to it. But if the landscape is inside the novel, then it is determined by it and so cannot constitute its ground.* The same thing may be said of the relation of any two members of the

> series: novel and map; real map and imaginary map; landscape and map. Each is both prior to the other and later than it, causer and caused, inside it, and outside it at once. (21; my emphasis)

Landscape, then, in relation to lived experience and to the representation of landscape inside a literary work, is a complex (what Miller calls a "reversible") set of relations of interiority and exteriority as well as priority and posteriority (21).

Miller's use of "reversible," is, however, inadequate to describe the set of relations that the current study undertakes. Reversibility connotes that the members of the series switch positions; I maintain that reciprocity, which involves informing and sustaining, better describes the ways in which landscape and poem relate to one another. In regard to criticism of topographical poetry, my modification—reciprocal for reversible—to Miller's insight means that conflicting views on the referent of topographical poetry (to either real or imagined places) must be examined carefully to show the tensions between both views of language—rooted-referential and uprooted-self-referential—and the impact that referential frames have not only on criticism of topographical poetry, but also on the ways in which the works of the genre are understood. When applied to Canadian topographical poems, an understanding of the reciprocal relations between word and world ends the completely spurious critical habit of, on the one hand, supposing that early poems are naively representational (that is, that they merely catalogue the history, topography, and inhabitants of what was then a relatively new land for most writers), and, on the other, crediting contemporary long poems with, by turns, cynically or playfully participating in the erosion of language as a vehicle of understanding and representation.[41] Neither aspect of this habit does justice to the sophistication and complexity of either the early of the contemporary poems, and neither articulates the historical and spatial meanings at work in this poetic form in Canada.

Hutcheon expands upon the notion of reference in relation to genre by arguing that reference in language occurs at four distinct, but related, levels. I will turn to these levels—the extratextual, intertextual, intratextual, and metatextual—in subsequent chapters. What needs to be noted at present is Hutcheon's argument that genre is a guide that helps to order reality and orient the reader:

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[41] Bentley quite accurately identifies a "successful devaluation" of pre-Modern long poems and their criticism by postmodern poetics, poetry, and criticism

> Genres . . . enable readers . . . to understand the context in which they must situate the referent. . . . It is very relevant to the reading experience whether or not the referent is believed to be real or fictive, that is, whether one is reading about the real world or one is creating an imaginary world for oneself. (4)

While Hutcheon's statement foregrounds the importance of genre for keying the reader's expectations about a text, it offers only an either/or choice between "real or fictive." However, that option does not address the collocation of referential and self-referential uses of language in topographical poetry.

Hutcheon argues that the novel "has had the most difficulty in escaping from naïve referential theories," because of its length, where poetry was more easily "rescued from the myth of instrumentality of language by the Symbolists" (1). But the topographical genre is almost always an extended form, which, like the novel, can never be one "coherent spatio-temporal unit in the reader's mind" (1). Moreover, because it trades on juxtapositions and

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("Bibliocritical" 643).

transpositions of location and time in its referential framework, it is impossible to envision the topographical poem as "rescued" from ingenuous referential theories.

The dual modes of reference of topographical poetry send dual messages to its reader. These do not allow an easy either/or choice between reading the text as a fictional one and reading it as a factual one. According to Hutcheon, it is genre itself that determines this choice for the reader:

> It is the reader's genre expectations and his imaginative creating of the fictive universe through the referents of language, and *not* the subject matter or any supposedly real referents, that determine the validity and even the status of the novel's world. (8)

This view, like Miller's, is located broadly within the context of the "novel's world" and more specifically within the genre of contemporary metafiction (8). Hutcheon engages in something of a tautology, arguing that genre, not its constituent modes of reference, determines the reader's orientation to the text; however, in her argument, the specific genre she treats, metafiction, is created by a particular kind of mode that she terms "auto-referential" (1). In effect, linguistic self-reflexiveness creates a genre which putatively does away with the problem of attending to any "supposedly real referents." If the referent in metafiction is language itself, then Hutcheon fails to account for the fact that real referents, as I argued with the Plains of Abraham, are themselves already signs. My point here is not that the topographical poetry is metafictive, but that as a genre it fails to provide what Hutcheon finds in metafiction—the simple but determining and ordering readerly cue to locate the text in only fiction or only fact.

This blend between referential modes already appeared in Johnson's description of topographical poetry. Although Johnson does not state it explicitly, he is clearly assuming two conditions of language, very much like the two that Miller describes. To point to a "particular landscape" is to assume the referential, ordinary, extratextual function of language; moreover, to assume that language may serve to explain the past of a site (Johnson's "historical retrospection") is to assume similar powers of truth-telling for language. However, self-referential language also invests Johnson's definition, in as much as the place of the poem is "poetically described." The crucial point to extract here is not that Johnson was somehow prescient of later generic understandings, but, rather, that writing at the time of the rise of topographical poetry in English, he clearly indicated that the genealogical make-up of this genre included a number of referential modes which were assumed to be unproblematically effective in locating, describing, and storying a landscape or a site—in short, landscaping it.

I emphasize that two modes of reference, one referential and one self-referential, comprise the topographical genre. These two modes are the building blocks of the form and there can be no appeal, such as Hutcheon's, to a larger structure called "genre" that ignores the conflation of referential and self-referential modes of language in topographical poetry. Further, because this genre arises in part from the neoclassical conviction that an essay may be versified, it merges didactic and descriptive writing, and thus is never strictly understood as fiction, even though the form is poetic. Last, the combination of these modes of reference empowers the readerly expectation that the topographical poet provide accurate and valid understandings of a place and of its history, as well as fulfil a variety of aesthetic standards. There exists, then, an entirely reasonable expectation that the topographical poet actually "get it right." "It," of course, is the detail of the site, and the nuance of its history. In this sense, topographical poetry presents an interpretive problematic because it is never entirely excusable that, on the one hand, a poem be historically or geographically invalid but a fine piece of verse, or, on the other hand, that it be descriptively accurate but poor verse. In the topographical genre, the inescapable expectation of faithful rendering of reality situates the reader at the "crossroads" of fiction and actuality that Whiteside and Issacharoff find at the centre of the debate around literary referentiality.

To contextualize this discussion, and to return to the problematic of topography in relation to language, Cary's preface to Abram's Plains provides a helpful illustration: "If I may be allowed to judge from experience, I must pronounce descriptive poetry, that exhibits a picture of the real scenes of nature, to be the most difficult to excel in" (1). Cary seems only to view language, in particular "descriptive poetry," in relation to its pictorial and mimetic qualities.[42] However, even Cary, writing from Quebec in 1789, displays his poetry's participation in both states of language, the referential ("real scenes of nature") and the self-referential. This second condition of language enters Cary's poem when, in the preface, he considers the efforts of James Thomson, Alexander Pope, and the elder Oliver Goldsmith in relation to the task of accurately depicting "scenes of nature." In particular, Cary discusses the merits of blank versus rhymed verse, and those poems, Windsor Forest (1713) and The Deserted Village (1770), that he will emulate. By these remarks, Cary signals that he is employing language along two referential schemes, one extratextual and the other intertextual. The interpretive dilemma that these two schemes create is subtle.

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[42] Cary works within neoclassical aesthetic and therefore mimetic theories. These include imitation not just of a geographical referent but also of a classical text; however, a contemporary long topographical poem, such as George Bowering's Kerrisdale Elegies (1984) with its imitation of Rilke's Duino Elegies (1923), cannot be considered, at least in this respect, so distinct from an

If one assumes a too rigid or schematic view of either condition of language, it is possible to argue, as does Kamboureli, that in the early topographical poems of Canada the relationship between sign and referent becomes distorted to the degree that the extratextual world is lost in the intertextual reference:

> The relation between Canadian poetry as a signifier and British poetry as a signified, besides its enabling possibilities, can also be a

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older poem such as Cary's.

> crippling one with regard to the discourse of Canadian experience. In deferring to the given tradition of the imperial country, the long poem of the nineteenth-century colony loses sight of its immediate world. Although a poetry of representation, it embraces a reality that does not intend to enunciate, in fact fails to acknowledge, an indigenous Canadian aesthetic. (17)

Even though Kamboureli admits to the extratextual and intertextual referentiality of language in general, perhaps because she is committed to an evolutionist model of literary development that seeks an "indigenous Canadian aesthetic," she finds the early Canadian long poem unseeing ("loses sight of its immediate world") and thus unable to refer outside itself (17).[43] In effect, Kamboureli, not the early Canadian long poem, loses site; she does not envision the external referent in the chain of landscape reference relations—that complex paradigm of interiority and exteriority as well as priority and posteriority-posited by Miller (21). Kamboureli argues not for a semiotic triangle of sign-signified-referent, but rather a sign-signified model, whereby any notion of the referent is lost.[44] She ascribes this loss to the set of colonial conditions that obtained with respect to immigrant writers attempting to negotiate between loyalty to their mother country and loyalty to their inability to ground themselves in their new land.

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[43] Kamboureli also says that her study is about "understanding the impact of colonialism on literary forms" (xiii).

Two consequences, both pertaining immediately to landscape representation, attend the sort of postcolonial paradigm that Kamboureli adduces for early Canadian topographical poems. First, without a firm commitment to the referential power of language, dichotomies—binaries even—appear between the imaginary or symbolic and the real, as well as between the conventional categories of the cultural and the natural. Put another way, the conjunctive force of Mitchell's view of landscape is lost and the concept as well as the poem representing the place are evacuated of their meaning. It becomes impossible to affirm the complexity of the relationship between a landscape and its representation, and impossible to acknowledge, as do Cosgrove and Daniels, that landscape is a "cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings" (1). Moreover, the images that Cosgrove and Daniels discuss are substantial; they argue that "a landscape park is more palpable but no more real, nor less imaginary, than a landscape painting or poem" (1). Without a firm commitment to the materiality of both representations—the poem and the place (Kamboureli's "immediate world")—it is possible somehow to posit the immateriality, and, finally, the unreality of the poem. Kamboureli does just this when she notes that early Canadian long poems create "textual landscapes" that are marked with "inauthenticity" (10-11).[45] She can, finally, go so far as to suggest that the early long poem of Canada is "ideologically inert," because she sees its language only as a set of intertextual references to the British long poem (17). In effect, the chain of referents—outside the poem, inside the poem, prior and posterior to it—that comprise a poem such as Abram's Plains disappears from

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[44] See Anna Whiteside's discussion (Issacharoff and Whiteside 183-86) for an able treatment of the way that de Saussure divorces the sign from the extra-linguistic

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referent.

[45] I am not equating the materiality of the signifier with what it signifies. Indeed, as Paul de Man notes, "what we call ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality, of reference with phenomenalism" (11). By arguing that poems cannot be "inauthentic" I wish to show that Kamboureli equates linguistic and environmental reality by finding a predetermined link between the colonial poem and the landscape of the mother country.

view. These referents are, of course, literary and real world; most important, they belong to a historical context.

HISTORY

Even if discussed in the narrowest terms, "history" is a misnomer when directed to landscape. As I pointed out earlier with reference to Johnson's definition of topographical poetry, the "historical retrospection" of topographical poems belongs to some "particular landscape." I take this collocation of history and landscape to be a conjunction of space and time in topographical poems; of these two terms, space is at the centre of many contemporary theoretical debates. These debates discuss space in a variety of confusing and conflicting ways, that are, finally, misunderstandings. Attempts to divorce space from time and isolate it as a unitary concept are the most grievous of these misconceptions.

Even if discussed in the narrowest terms, as a mimetic effect or illusion, the space of literature cannot be divorced from time. But, as Henri Lefebvre points out, modern epistemology has inherited and adopted the idea that space is a "'mental thing' or a 'mental place'" that is divorced not only from time, but even from ideology (3). However, developments in contemporary astronomy and physics reveal the spurious nature of this habit. Albert Einstein's theories of relativity and the later emergence of quantum theory have profoundly changed the way space is understood not only in physics but also in contemporary philosophy. The most basic change the post-Einsteinian thinker must face is the inseparability of space and time. In his "Autobiographical Remarks," published in 1951, commenting on the special theory of relativity, Einstein remarked, "it thus no longer makes any sense to talk of space and time; rather we should begin to examine the meaning of space-time" (282). Indeed, in 1961, Bertrand Russell noted that the theory of relativity has caused philosophical thought to substitute space-time for space and time (Russell 786).

Russell's and Einstein's views are pertinent and related to space or place in the context of literary theory and criticism, for they help to highlight the irony of our current situation. Where the physical sciences articulate the inseparability of space and time, several other discourses, namely geography and social theory, are attempting not so much to isolate space from time, as to privilege space over time. Much of this work is seen as a corrective to what Edward Soja calls the "essentially historical epistemology" that "pervades the critical consciousness of modern social theory" (10). Similar problems of "critical consciousness" exist in literary critical considerations of space. If contemporary physics and mathematics have melded space and time into space-time, literary theory and criticism remain fixed on two categories: space *and* time.[46]

These two categories appear in the division of literary discourse into two modes: narration and description. Even though there are many subtleties, nuances, and points of discussion that ought to, indeed, in theory do, overturn this basic distinction between the mimetic and the diegetic, in practice, as W.J.T. Mitchell notes, "the dominant tendency in Western literary theory is resolutely iconoclastic, that is, antipictorial, antivisual, antispatial, even, at the most general level, antimimetic," in other words, antidescriptive ("Space" 91). Indeed, Mitchell argues that from a "literary point of view" space "does not exist, or should not exist" ("Space" 90). Space, then, enters literature as a "dubious fiction" of mimesis, one that Michael Riffaterre calls a "hurdle" that must be overcome for true semiosis to occur ("Space" 92). To Riffaterre could be added a number of other contemporary literary theorists whose work, particularly by those who focus on narrative, continually privileges time over space, the active over the static. These categories—time and space—appear natural and necessary; Mitchell argues that they come loaded with the "authority of Newton and Kant" and serve as "irreducible conditions for the intelligibility of the physical and mental universes" ("Space" 94). As natural and necessary categories, time and space control our discourse and manage to escape analysis because they are preconditions to further insight. And yet, Mitchell is surely right to note that "we cannot experience a spatial form except in time; we cannot talk about our temporal experience without invoking spatial measures" ("Spatial" 544).

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[46] Mikhail Bakhtin's portmanteau word, гвремяпространство (transliterated *vremiaprostranstvo*), nicely unifies time and space (84). The term may be rendered as either *timespace* or "chronotope" (84). Either term underscores the indivisibility of time and space. Nevertheless, Bakhtin privileges time over space so that the topic of space vanishes almost entirely from his analysis. I thank Rita Dirks for consulting Bakhtin's essay in the Russian and verifying the alternate translations of *vremiaprostranstvo*.

Time and space have been even further divided from one another in the modernist debate over spatial form. Joseph Frank's essay, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (1945), oddly enough, serves only to place critical emphasis on the temporal aspects of literature. Paradoxically, Frank used the term "spatial form" to describe an atemporal quality in certain modernist literary work that disrupts the temporal and narrative sequences of English prose and poetry with disjunctive syntax, such that the elements of the text are "juxtaposed in space rather than unrolling in time" (47). As Mitchell points out, this argument has been attacked rigorously, most critics charging that "'spatial form' is a 'mere metaphor' which has been given misplaced concreteness and that it denies the essentially temporal nature of literature" ("Spatial" 541). One of the consequences of this debate is what David Jordan calls a false dichotomy that assumes "a work of art must reflect *either* the internal workings of human cognition *or* the external data of real-world historicity" (78). Jordan, however, by using the term, "real-world historicity" (78), emphasizes that referentiality is only about time.

A reading strategy for topographical poetry must avoid these three critical errors: a well-meaning but imbalanced privileging of space over time, subordinating description to narration, and assuming that "spatial form" is just another kind of narrative. Of these three, the second deserves more consideration because New Criticism, the dominant mode of literary criticism in this century, consistently encourages readings that shift literary description to the background of criticism. Focusing on the independent and autonomous nature of the work, New Criticism avoids any reference to the biography of the author, to the social and material conditions of its production, and to the effects of the poem on the reader. Moreover, because each poem is thought self-sufficient, its place in the history of literary forms and its subject matter go unaddressed. And, as autonomous creations, literary works are conceived of as special kinds of language which are not true in the sense that the language of science or of logic is true. Rather, New Criticism takes the language of literature to be a series of pseudo-statements that present a dramatized form of subjective truth.[47]

The net effect of New Criticism's belief in the autonomous nature of the literary object is felt in the way that description becomes the major vehicle for constructing the self-enclosed literary world. For New Critics, however, description does not refer; it simply forms a setting in and against which the real action and meaning can occur. Although New Criticism is largely *passé*, its emphasis on an autonomous "setting" has proven tenacious, and, as a consequence, literary description is seen as a digression from and as an impediment to narrative unfolding. The place or space made by description, then, remains an ambiguously valued one.

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[47] This belief is the assumption that underlies Frank Davey's attempt to redefine the long poem not as "documentary," but as "countertextual." Davey's argument is strategically interesting because he attempts to counter New Critical assumptions about truth-telling in literature; however, he simplifies the notion of authority in relation to truth nearly to the point of caricature.

I see the need for several correctives to the seeming confusion over the roles of space and time in literary criticism. First, the inexactitude of space should be localized. That is, the idea of location is fundamental to place; it is thus a site, and through its connection to other places it is also a situation. Second, place involves an integration of elements of nature and culture—each is distinct—implying that each place is unique. Third, places are emerging or becoming. In other words, they exist in time as much as in space—thus they have a historical component (Lukerman 169-71).

Topographical poetry is obviously a complex literary form because it mixes modes of reference and because it blends space and time into space-time. Admittedly these characteristics do not render it a unique genre, but they do point out the need to re-examine assumptions about the unsophisticated referentiality of older poems and, conversely, the oversophistication of contemporary poems. In addition, because space and time merge in these poems, both history and place demand critical attention. I suggest that the very term "topographical" provides a plan for reading these intricacies of this genre.

Topos speaks of the literary topoi that constellate the genericity of the form; these topoi constitute an unavoidable code of literary reference in both old and new poems. My task in the following chapters is to make a case for the self-referential sophistication of the pre-Confederation poems, and, at the same time, to make a case for the real world referentiality of the contemporary poems. This last point shows that the topographical poem is also a site; if the poem is seen as a site, τόπος is literally topos, or place, position, region. Taken together, these two senses of *topos* (textual and quotidian) recall Guillory's notice that the morpheme is semantically ambiguous, even in Aristotle's work. Although Guillory does not specify what he means by "in Aristotle," it is clear that he has in mind not Aristotle's Physics, but, rather, his Topics and the Rhetoric in which *topos* slides between a place in visual memory and a place in a text (10).

As a generic descriptor, then, "topographical" carries two basic meanings that modify the noun "poetry." By disassembling the agglutinative term into its two morphemes, what we assume is a naturalized English term is revealed as only transliterated from the Greek. The first morpheme, *topos*, denotes a quotidian site external to any text; *topos* also denotes a location within a text, so this second meaning indicates the interplay between a site and a citation (as in an excerpt, a passage, or a textual location). In relation to topographical poetry these two senses of the word τόπος point toward the epistemological, philosophical, and aesthetic problem of how texts refer to the external world; they show the reciprocity between intratextual and extratextual conditions that co-reside in the topographical poem. That is, they place on view the problem of the alternating concatenation of figure and ground, of inside and outside, of anteriority and posteriority, particularly with regard to γραφέ, writing.[48] Writing, the second morpheme of topographical, is, of course, but one more way of signifying that such poetry is not only a text, but also an inscribed discursive landscape, or a writing of Canadian places.

To read topographical poetry is to begin with the specific geographical locale that is the poem's subject; to read topographical poetry is to refuse to dismiss the poem as merely part of the well-known fascination Canadian poets have with their natural surroundings. In place of "natural" surroundings and their naïve representation, the "whole web of social, political, and historical realities" that subtend the landscape composed in any given topographical poem must be examined (Threadgold 106). To speak of reading topographical poems carefully for their dual and confusing modes of reference and for their melding of time and space, I must shift from assertion to demonstration. In the next chapter, I will begin by aligning Henry Kelsey's "Now Reader Read . . . " (1690-92) with Jon Whyte's long poem, Homage, Henry Kelsey (1981).

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[48] I have given the lexical form of the term—the first person singular active indicative. English dictionaries that provide etymologies of the term most frequently give

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the infinitive form of γραφειν, *graphein*, to write.

CHAPTER TWO: PART ONE

> There is, in fact, a world of poetry indistinguishable from the world in which we live, or I ought to say, no doubt, from the world in which we shall come to live, since what makes the poet the potent figure that he is, or was, or ought to be, is that he creates the world to which we turn incessantly and without knowing it and that he gives to life the supreme fictions without which we are unable to conceive of it. (Wallace Stevens, Noble 31)

The previous chapter concluded by arguing that Canadian topographical poems blend intertextual and extratextual modes of reference to depict a distinctive landscape, one that is located at a juncture of representation which Issacharoff and Whiteside call the "crossroads of reality and fiction" (vii). Reading for the spatial and historical meaning compacted within this juncture requires a generically specific reading practice. By examining Henry Kelsey's "Now Reader Read . . . " and Jon Whyte's Homage, Henry Kelsey, this chapter demonstrates such a method, one unlike that employed in other genres, for example, a novel of manners. Where the novel reader minds various codes of gesture, dress, accent, ceremony, or conversation, the topographical reader heeds codes pertinent to rivers, lakes, biota, routes, and places.[49] That many of these landscape features are natural things implies that topographical poetry is merely another form of nature poetry, but the subjects of topographical poetry are also constructed things—bridges, buildings, neighbourhoods, ruins, and gardens to name some of the more conspicuous examples. A topographical reader thus attends not only to the relations between people and nature but also to the relations between humans and their built environment, as well as to the history of those relations.[50]

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[49] I am indebted to Lawrence Buell for the substance of this

Because topographical poets write out of lived experiences, topographical writing deals with what Henri Lefebvre calls the "affective kernel" of represented and real places; to Lefebvre, that kernel is equivalent to "bed, bedroom, dwelling, house" or to "square, church, graveyard," and it "embraces the loci of *passion*, of *action* and of *lived situations*" (42; my emphasis). With these words, Lefebvre delineates human existence by demarcating the places that symbolize conception, life, and death. By emphasizing that human existence is always emplaced, his commentary serves to indicate that the seemingly arid categories that constitute topographical poetry—history,

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analogy.

[50] This focus on the interaction between humans and their constructed environment points to one key difference between ecocriticism, which focuses primarily on nature and ecology, and a topographical reading practice.

landscape, and referentiality—are, in fact, invested with the paradigmatic kernels of experience in Canada. Topographical poetry, however, unlike many things "Canadian," is not in itself a poetry of identity; rather, it foregrounds a variety of emplaced experiences that form the raw material of what is often called a Canadian identity. Both of the poems considered in this chapter represent a unique set of actions, experiences, and emotions arising from a unique interaction with a particular landscape; in turn, each of the poems forms a particular landscape. That landscape, however, is best viewed by investigating beyond standard literary considerations to examine the history, geography, biology, as well as topography that form the subjects of the poems under examination.

It must be underscored that landscape representation is the chief discursive function of the topographical poem, but each landscape formed issues from the poem's historical context, as well as the ethnic background, class, gender, and education of its author. Because the earlier of the two poems currently under examination derives from Henry Kelsey's service to the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) its frame of reference is largely mercantile and imperial; because the later poem arises from the context of Canada's centennial its frame of reference is both regionalist and nationalist. The interpretations offered in this chapter do not overturn this basic distinction between the two poems; however, Kelsey's seemingly naive "Now Reader Read" displays a remarkable and unexpected sensitivity to, and appreciation of, the land that it represents. Conversely, Whyte's contemporary and seemingly more learned poem displays an unexpected insensitivity to the landscape and history that it represents. This difference between the two poems reinforces an important point made earlier—that descriptive poetic techniques also serve other governing intentions than delineation of the object world. In Whyte's case, regional and national pride merge with an idiosyncratic interest in myth to shape a rather startling and contradictory version of Canadian history and landscape. A detailed discussion of this portrayal is possible, however, only if Kelsey's poem is first examined at length.

I

Even a cursory scan of Kelsey's "Now Reader Read" reveals his habitual use of the first person throughout the poem. Bentley calls this tic "insistent, almost obsessive," and he suggests that these repetitions emphasize Kelsey's "aloneness and singularity" ("Set Forth" 15). This interpretation is one worthy of further consideration, which will occur later in this discussion, but at present it is necessary to examine how Kelsey's use of the first person draws attention to his person, to the biographical information necessary for a contemporary reader if he is to make links between Kelsey's lived experience and his representation of Canada.

Henry Kelsey was most likely born in 1667.[51] On 6 May 1684, when he was seventeen, he entered the service of the HBC and sailed for Hudson Bay aboard the Lucy with Captain John Outlaw (K.G. Davies, "Kelsey" 308). The Lucy landed on the western side of the Bay, at the Nelson River, where Kelsey was stationed at a fort which was later resituated and called York Fort.[52] Because Kelsey's years of service with the HBC coincided with the battles between the French and English for control of Hudson Bay, he was frequently at other posts on James Bay. Except for the years from 1694 to 1696 and from 1697 to 1714 when the French held York Fort (which they called Fort Bourbon), most of Kelsey's life was spent at York.[53] By 1701, at thirty-four, he had gained some nautical ability, for he then became master of a vessel of some fifty tons, the Knight frigate. When Kelsey reached his fifties, he became deputy governor of Albany in 1714; later, from 1718 to 1722, he was made governor of all the Bay settlements. He also made voyages in search of the Northwest Passage in 1719 and 1721. In 1722, however, the HBC unceremoniously ended his employ by stating "Wee think it convenient to Call you home." At home in England, Kelsey

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[51] The date of Kelsey's death is certain; however, the year of his birth is a matter of some question. See K.G. Davies, "Kelsey," for the most detailed information on Kelsey's life. Bentley inexplicably gives Kelsey's dates either as 1667-1774 ("Set Forth" 9 and Mimic Fires 13) or as 1667-1771 (Early Long Poems 1).

[52] York Fort or York Factory, established in 1684 by Governor Geyer of the HBC, is the oldest permanent European settlement in Manitoba. This place was often called "Port Nelson" or "Hayes River" before it was resituated; not until the 1680s was it regularly called York Fort. "York Fort" or just "York," are used throughout this discussion

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for consistency and clarity.

[53] Kelsey did, however, make numerous passages between the Bay and England. After his inland journey, he wintered at York and then returned to England in 1693. He re-enlisted with the HBC in 1694 and arrived back at York in early August the same year. When York was taken by the French in October 1694, Kelsey became a prisoner and was shipped to France in the following year. He arrived back in England sometime in 1695-96; sailing on 2 June 1696, he set out again to York. Although York was retaken, it was surrendered again to the French on 2 September 1697. As before, Kelsey was sent to France. He returned to England sometime at the end of 1697, and, on 25 May 1698, he returned to the Bay, this time to Albany. Between 1703 and 1705 Kelsey was in England; he returned to Albany in 1706 and remained there until 1712 when he travelled back to England. A delay in preparing documents for the handing over of York to the English under the treaty of Utrecht caused a year's postponement to Kelsey's last departure

petitioned for an appointment as captain of the HBC ship Hannah, an action which hints that he was still a vigorous and adventurous seaman in 1724. The appointment, however, was denied, and Kelsey died the same year in his own house in Church Street, East Greenwich (K.G. Davies, "Kelsey" 313). As an apprentice, as a mariner, and as a governor, Kelsey rendered forty years of competent, but unremarkable, service to the HBC.

As an inland traveller, however, Kelsey occupies a unique place in history, one earned through a number of journeys west inland from Hudson Bay. Although Kelsey's third journey is the most celebrated, he undertook it only because he had earned the approbation of his superiors for his success at two earlier excursions. Undertaken in 1687, the first trip was a winter's trek of about a month from York Fort to New Severn, the HBC fort on the Severn River, with a packet of mail, a walk of some two hundred miles that several other men had failed to complete. On the second trip, Kelsey was selected to be part of a small detail of eight men sent from York up to Churchill River to establish an HBC post there. The group set sail in the Hopewell, but the ship was hampered by ice. At Kelsey's suggestion, the ship's captain, James Young, put Kelsey and

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from England in 1714 (K.G. Davies, "Kelsey" 310).

a companion named Thomas Savage ashore so that they could proceed on foot. By Kelsey's computation he and Savage travelled 138 miles in a northerly direction, sufficiently far north to reach the Barrens where they sighted muskoxen. Although this trip failed to realize its purpose—to "discover & Endeavour to bring to a commerce y^e northern Indians" (KP 15)—because of it, and the previous journey, Kelsey gained a reputation for being a "a very active Lad Delighting much in Indians Compa. being never better pleased then when hee is Travelling amongst them" (Hudson's Bay 18).[54] Written from HBC House, London, these words help to explain why Kelsey, on 12 June 1690, at the age of approximately twenty-three, under the direction of the HBC, departed York Fort on the north bank of the Hayes River where it debouches onto Hudson Bay and travelled upriver into what are now called the Canadian prairies, crossing the grassland plains, reaching (perhaps) as far as the

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[54] Unless noted otherwise, all quotations from Kelsey depend on the 1994 reprint of The Kelsey Papers (Kelsey), cited in the text as KP. Because of the difficulty in distinguishing Kelsey's verse from his prose, line numbers from "Reader" appear in italics. I follow the conventions of the 1994 reprint by retaining Kelsey's use of the ampersand as well as his suprascript contractions; letters or words which are cancelled in Kelsey's manuscript are reproduced in strikeout characters. The oblique, used to denote the end of a line of verse and at the end of each page of Kelsey's manuscript, is not retained.

Touchwood Hills of Saskatchewan.[55]

Although frequently acclaimed an heroic journey of exploration with many imputed discoveries—the first English descriptions of bison, grizzly bear, and the land west of the Bay—Kelsey's journey had a primarily mercantile mission, prompted by "Sallery" in search of profit (HBC Governor Marleborough, Hudson's Bay 115).[56] George Geyer, the governor of York Fort, identified the purpose of the expedition in a letter to the HBC Committee at London: "I sent up Henry Kelsey (who chearfully undertook the Journey) up into the Country of the *Assinae Poets*, with the Captain of that Nation, to call, encourage, and invite, the remoter Indians to a Trade with us (Hudson's Bay 115 n1)."[57] The phrase, "with the Captain of that Nation," indicates that Kelsey made no discoveries; rather, he travelled with Aboriginals on existing trade and travel routes. Two years later, in the summer of 1692, Kelsey returned to York Fort with a "good fleet of Indians," thereby fulfilling the duty laid on him by the company (HBC Committee to Geyer, Hudson's Bay 187).[58] It was during this trip, or possibly after, that Kelsey recorded its details in a commonplace book in which he also composed a descriptive poem of heroic couplets the first few words of which—"Now Reader Read . . . "—now supply the title for his poem (*1*).

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[55] It is difficult to reconstruct the exact route that Kelsey took. Ronaghan, who offers the most accessible discussion of this topic, is also an excellent guide through the works of writers who disagree over Kelsey's itinerary (89-94).

[56] Lord John Churchill, who was made earl of Marleborough April 1689 and first duke in 1702, was governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1685 to 1691. The Churchill River, originating from Lac La Loche Saskatchewan and emptying into Hudson Bay, bears his name, as does the town of Churchill, Manitoba.

[57] Kelsey, among other groups, also names the "Naywatame Poets," a still unidentified people (KP 3). Dale Russell, in a concise discussion (74-88), evaluates some of the possible answers to this puzzle (Mandan, Assiniboine, Sioux, Snake, Atsina, and Blackfoot). He argues that the Naywatame were Hidatsa, a Siouan speaking group who were seasonal occupants of southeastern Saskatchewan (84).

This text was unknown and unavailable to a reading public before 1929 because the commonplace book in which Kelsey composed his poem and kept his journal appears to have become the property of the HBC sometime after his

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"*Poets*" is likely a rendering of the Cree word, *pwat*, for the Sioux. The "Assinae Poets" are the people known today as the Assiniboine. In the HBC documents the Assiniboine are called the Stone Indians, Assinipoets, or just Poets (79). Terry Goldie mistakenly makes "poets" mean what it does in English so that it will conform to his examination of European constructions of oral eloquence in the Native peoples of Canada (111).

[58] On 17 June 1693 the Company Committee wrote to Geyer saying "*we are glad that Henery Kelsey is safe returned & brought a good fleet of Indians downe with him and hope he has effected that wch. he was sent about in keeping the Indians from warring one with another, that they may have the more time to look after theire trade and bring larger quantity of Furrs and other trad with them to the factory*"

death in 1724.[59] By circumstances still unexplained, Kelsey's book appears to have come into the possession of Arthur Dobbs (fl. 1733-63), an active eighteenth-century critic of the HBC, whose agitations against it receive discussion later because they are particularly relevant to Whyte's poem about Kelsey. That Dobbs held Kelsey's journal seems certain because in 1926 his descendant, Arthur Dobbs, discovered some papers that had apparently been "packed away" in the library in Castle Dobbs, at Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland (Whillans 11). Among these materials was a 128-page commonplace book inscribed "Henry Kelsey his Book being y^{e} Gift of James Hubbud in the year of our Lord 1693."[60] The book, published in 1929 by the Public Archives of Canada and the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, is now known as The Kelsey Papers, even though it is not an exhaustive collection of Kelsey's writing. This

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(Hudson's Bay 187).

[59] It should be noted that in 1928 Charles Napier Bell presented an outline of The Kelsey Papers, as well as portions of its introduction, to the Manitoba Historical Society. A version of his paper, which included portions of Kelsey's journal and the whole of "Reader," was published in 1928.

[60] The book itself is a blank copy book, ostensibly the gift of James Hubbud. There exists no information on James Hubbud; see Doughty and Martin xliii n1, for a reference to an Isaac Hubbud. For a more detailed description of the copy book's contents and for a discussion of several

volume contains accounts of six major incidents in his career, the record of his 1690 to 1692 journey, several short letters, and a memorandum of Kelsey's service with the HBC, 1683 to 1722 (KP 1).

Both Germaine Warkentin and John Warkentin argue that the contents of Kelsey's notebook are carefully arranged, with the poetic account of the 1690-92 expedition standing as the very first entry ("'The Boy'" 104; "Introduction" xiv). This pride of place is entirely deserved, for the poem is, as John Warkentin notes, "more contemplative and reflective" than Kelsey's other writing (xiii). It should not be supposed, however, that "Now Reader Read" is only the prologue or introduction to the larger prose journal. This assumption is often made in conjunction with another misunderstanding that suggests "Now Reader Read" describes only the first year of Kelsey's inland expedition. John Warkentin, to name only one of many commentators, says that the poem is a "prologue" that describes "Kelsey's first summer of travel" (xiii). In fact, Kelsey's poem describes his route up the Hayes and Saskatchewan rivers, and it names the "neck of land" (*42*) where he wintered in 1690-91. As well, Kelsey describes the prairies on which he journeyed on foot, and he permits his reader to surmise

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variant manuscripts see also Doughty and Martin, xii-xiii.

that at the end of the summer he returned to his wintering site and there staked a claim on behalf of the HBC. These details are related in plain and unadorned verse that suggests that Kelsey received very little formal education. The poem, nevertheless, displays the observations of a writer who had the keen and knowledgable, if mercantilist, eyes of a hunter and a trader. Careful attention to this now widely available poem reveals that, even though its intended audience was the HBC, its "affective kernel" contains a sensitive and instructive representation of Canada's waterways and inland plains.[61]

II

When undertaking the exposition of a poem, one must reasonably begin at the beginning, but there are occasions when a compelling need exists to start with the poem's conclusion because it places on view the chief critical concerns relevant to that text. Kelsey's poem, I think, is such a case, for the way in which he ends his poem forces his reader carefully to consider what role genre plays in the poem's interpretation, as well as to consider the poem's relevance and place among contemporary critical interests. In particular, the matter is broached of whether genre is a hierarchical structure comprising relatively pure and static forms or whether it is simply a means of guiding interpretation. This tension is best displayed in two contemporary responses to "Now Reader Read."

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[61] Under the title "Kelsey's Journal," a fragment of "Now Reader Read" (lines 26 to 44) appears in The Poets' Record (1975), edited by Keith Wilson and Elva Motheral (6). The entire text of "Reader" accompanies both the 1981 and 1989 versions of Whyte's poem. Germaine Warkentin prints the whole poem in her essay (1991). Bentley includes it in his anthology of early long poems (1993); Epp (1993) reprints the poem, as well as Kelsey's prose journals and other writings, as does the reprint of The Kelsey Papers (1994).

As he concludes his poem, Kelsey speaks of a place that he named "deerings point" (after the deputy governor of the HBC), and he also describes the means by which he substantiated the year of his visit to the grasslands:

> At deerings point after the frost
> I set up their a Certain Cross
> In token of my being ~~their~~ there
> Cut out on it y^{e} date of year
> And Likewise for to veryfie the same
> added to it my master Sir Edward deerings name
> So having not more to trouble you wth all I am
> Sir your most obedient & faithfull Serv^{t}. at
> Command
>
> HENRY KELSEY (*83-90*)

In these lines, and in the larger prose journal which they accompany, Bentley discerns "the beginning of the complex relations among words, things, subjects, landscapes, and audiences whose permutations and combinations constitute the poetry of Canada" ("Set Forth" 9). In contrast to the way that Bentley positions "Now Reader Read" at the inception, indeed, at the forefront, of Canadian critical and creative concerns, W.H. New remarks that Kelsey's writing is worthwhile mostly for its "antiquarian value" (42). On the one hand, he grants that it "record[s] time and place," but, on the other hand, he protests that it offers "little of character and episode" (42).[62] Unquestionably, New and Bentley bring different expectations and perceptions to the same text. The salutary aspect of the poem, its reference to "time and place," appears undecipherable and unexceptional to New because he considers "simple documentation" as only the primordial substratum of "narrative literature," that superior and higher kind to which all Canadian writing is moving (42); thus he regards "Now Reader Read" as a lower kind of writing. New uses genre in a hierarchical fashion and classifies Kelsey's poem within the category of "exploration" writing (38), an inferior form of "loosely reportorial" non-fiction (24). Although Bentley's phrase, "the beginning," implies that "Now Reader Read" is undeveloped, he finds the poem valuable in itself precisely because it refers to time and place. Put into the terms employed in the previous chapter, Bentley's high estimation of Kelsey's text depends upon, and issues from, its topographical qualities, that is to say, its representation of the spatial and temporal elements of an early Canadian landscape.

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[62] New applies his comments also to the journal of

New's comments show that genre serves not only as a taxonomic device but also as a means of indicating what he regards as appropriate provinces of criticism. By placing Kelsey's writing into the realm of "antiquarian" interest, New implies that the poem itself is antiquated, and, infelicitously, he insinuates that study of it is, at least, an inconsequential genre of endeavour because the poem is no longer novel. New's commentary on Kelsey's writing is found, of course, in A History of Canadian Literature, a text which only surveys the material it treats. Significantly, however, New repeats (without rethinking) the sentiment of Frye's infamous words in his conclusion to the Literary History of Canada. Frye's contention that the writings of early explorers are "as

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Anthony Henday (42).

innocent of literary intention as a mating loon" (822) finds an echo in Kamboureli's assertion that the early Canadian long poem is "ideologically inert" (17). By way of response to these perfunctory remarks the following paragraphs argue that Kelsey's interest in time and place is the very thing that makes his text ideologically alive and worthy of contemporary literary critical attention.

Kelsey's own description of the poem, which he calls a "small Relation" (*20*), indicates the need to attend to its loco-descriptive work because this nomenclature points to the discursive family of "Now Reader Read," to what Tim Unwin calls the "topographical tradition," an expression referring to all writing, whether poetry or prose, that habitually provides descriptive information about people and places (46). Unwin's broad category is pertinent to this discussion, for it affords a means of approaching a generically mixed poem such as Kelsey's, which is at once topographical and epistolary. Indeed, Kelsey's epistolary manner foregrounds the generical richness and complexity of his seemingly primitive poem; nevertheless, the presence of the epistle as a contributory genre in a topographical discourse cautions against making too much of the conspicuous similarities between "Now Reader Read" and other verse epistles of the seventeenth century. For example, Bentley compares the plain style of Kelsey's text to Ben Jonson's "Epistle to Master John Selden" because, in addition to their comparable style, diction, and length, these two poems possess apparently similar generical features ("Set Forth" 17-18). Although the epistolary closure, "Sir your most obedient & faithfull Serv^{t}. at Command" (*90*), warrants this line of inquiry, Kelsey's equally important description of his poem, "my small Relation" (*20*), as well as its topographical content, mitigates against comparing it only to the canonical verse epistles of the seventeenth century, for his poem is neither familiar, nor philosophical, nor moralistic, nor sentimental, nor addressed to a friend, lover, or patron.[63] Kelsey's letter is also an actual correspondence, not a didactic form fictionalizing its epistolary nature such as the verse epistle becomes in Jonson's hands.

If the descriptive and missive qualities of "Now Reader Read" are considered in ways that are less comparative and more in keeping with the thesis that topographical poetry displays the interaction of people and places, then Kelsey's remarkably self-conscious phrase, "hopeing they will except of this my small relation / which here I have pend" displays his awareness of the fact that he is representing himself in writing from a remote place. This intentionality given to writing shows New's description, "loosely reportorial," as misleading, for Kelsey's poem thus incorporates one of the central generical features of the verse epistle. Namely, as Claudio Guillén describes the epistle, it enacts a crucial passage from orality to writing itself, or at least the practical interaction between the two (78). Inasmuch as Kelsey's poem presents itself partly as a verse epistle, it shows the process whereby writing "begins to involve the writer in a silent, creative process of self-distancing and self-modelling, leading perhaps, as in autobiography, to fresh knowledge or even to fiction" (Guillén 78). Like New's commentary on Kelsey, Guillén's analysis of the epistle imbeds a generical hierarchy, but his essay does not work to dismiss the epistle; rather, he places in it a continuum, much in the way that Bentley puts "Now Reader Read" in a continuum of Canadian poetry. Guillén, of course, is concerned with the verse epistle per se, but his work provides a helpful insight into a generally neglected form such as topographical poetry in Canada. To Guillén's work on the epistle, a topographical perspective must be added.

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[63] See Aubin, 267, for a poem dating from 1634 that is both topographical and a relation. Germaine Warkentin notes that in the seventeenth century the Spanish "devised the *relación geográfica*," a specific genre for explorers to use when they recorded their observations (109).

This viewpoint is shown, surprisingly, in the poem's beginning, to which it is now appropriate to turn:

> Now Reader Read for I am well assur'd
> Thou dost not know the hardships I endur'd
> In this same desert where Ever y^t I have been
> Nor wilt thou me believe without y^t thou had seen
> The Emynent Dangers that did often me attend
> But still I lived in hopes y^t once it would amend
> And makes me free from hunger & from Cold
> Likewise many other things w^{ch} I cannot here unfold
> (1-8)

Readers of travel poems will, at first glance, find a number of familiar subjects: "hardships," "dangers," an inappropriate, but commonplace, reference to "desert," and, given that "Emynent" partly connotes incredible, the matter of the report's credibility. These stock elements prompt Bentley to suggest that "Now Reader Read" should be likened to Othello's speech to his Venetian masters. Generically, Bentley is on firm ground, for Shakespeare draws from Sir Walter Ralegh's travel account, *Discoverie of the Large Bewtiful Empire of Guiana* (1596), in order to put the discourse of adventure and description into Othello's lines, whose tales of "hairbreadth scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach" (I.iii) and reference to "antres vast and deserts idle" closely resemble Kelsey's "hardships . . . endur'd / in this same desert" and the attendant "Emynent Dangers" (*2-5*).[64] Ralegh through Shakespeare, however, offers more than an allusive and probable intertext. Ralegh's full title, The Discoverie of the Large Rich, and Bewtiful Empire of Guiana, expands and makes explicit his text's generical form: a "*relation* of the great and Golden Citie of Manoa" (title page of first edition; my emphasis). Seen through this intertext, Othello's lines are a relation, not just of a place, but of the interplay between fact and fiction that comprises what Stephen Greenblatt calls the "self-fashioning" of the early modern period (1). Greenblatt argues that a "characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving" took shape at this time which was characterized by "considerable anxiety" because, among other things, it entailed the representation of "one's nature or intention in speech or actions" (2-3). For both Othello and Kelsey this representation involves depiction of a self in relation to a place or places. Thus, the self that Kelsey displays and fashions in relation to "hardships," "this same desert,"[3] and the much more expansive "where Ever y^t I have been" (*2-3*) is not merely, to use Guillén's description of the epistolary self, evidence of a "writer in a silent, creative process of self-distancing and self-modelling" because that operation is a placeless one that involves only *writing* (78). Kelsey's address to his reader figures itself through places: it is writing from a place about a place. Put differently, "Now Reader Read" is *topos graphein*—place writing—and the self it displays (which is manifest in the habitual use of "I," "me," and "my") is an emplaced one, a topographical self. Considered in this way, the poem is not entirely what Bentley argues it is, a manifestation of an "isolated" individualism ("Set Forth" 15); rather, the frequent use of the first person demonstrates the conventions of both the epistle and the topographical poem. Of the former genre, Guillén notes that the "epic, lyrical, dramatic" conventions were not sufficient for the writer willing to confront ample regions of human living and feeling: either the opulent New World recently discovered, beyond the Atlantic, or the humble and endlessly rich regions of inner, individual, daily

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[64] Percy Adams elaborates on the prevalence of the letter as

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a literary form for relating travel experiences (172-78).

experience" (98-9). Guillén's emphasis on inner and outer "regions" points to the spatial quality of the epistle and to the ease with which it can be blended and subsumed within the topographical poem. In this regard, because Kelsey's poem pays equal attention to inner and outer landscapes it can be described as a part of what Edward W. Soja characterizes as the experience of modernity, one which "captures a broad mesh of sensibilities that reflects the specific and changing meanings of the three most basic and formative dimensions of human existence: space, time, and being" (25).

Soja's elaboration of these dimensions in the work of Marshall Berman helps to underline the qualities that so invigorate Kelsey's poem. Of Berman's work Soja argues there is a "special place given to the ways we think about and experience time and space, history and geography, sequence and simultaneity, event and locality, the immediate period and region in which we live" (25). Kelsey's seemingly "antiquarian" poem shows this special emphasis on time and place. Because Kelsey possesses an orientation to the world that routinely juxtaposes time and place—"sequence and simultaneity, event and locality"—his poem is much more than a generical scheme fulfilled. Rather, it represents the "loci of passion, of action and of lived situations" that prompts Lefebvre to declare that "representational space is alive. It speaks" (42). Thus, to the reader who will foreground its vital dimensions, "Now Reader Read" becomes more than a voice of the past, more than a genre of the past. Read topographically, Kelsey's poem is alive because it re-presents the combination of a person interacting with a place. This now extended response to Kelsey's closing and opening lines indicates the need to read the entire poem for the ways in which its prosody represents space, time, and being.

The first few couplets of Kelsey's poem are not polished in the high Augustan sense, but the poem belongs to the Restoration, not the Age of Pope. Bentley's observation on one example of Kelsey's use of an extra metrical foot, "even Pope might have approved of Kelsey's simple and sprightly alexandrine, which is all the more remarkable in the context of Canadian poetry for having been written well before the Essay on Criticism," raises two important points ("Set Forth" 21). First, "Now Reader Read" obviously predates Augustan poetics. Second, less obviously, Dryden is a more appropriate benchmark by which to gauge Kelsey's poetry. Thus, the frequent ruptures that Bentley locates in Kelsey's style do not constitute abnormal Pope but typical Dryden, for Dryden's earlier verse admits triplet lines, the occasional hexameter or alexandrine, and the frequent use of run-on lines, all of which are routinely avoided by Pope. Dryden's elegiac reminder that "Wit will shine / through the harsh Cadence of a rugged line," from "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham," is particularly apposite to Kelsey's style (178). Dryden's poetics, as Kelsey's immediate stylistic context, do not improve the prosody of "Now Reader Read . . . , " but they diminish demands for metrical regularity and obedience to the strictures of the couplet; perhaps this diminishment is apposite, if fortuitous, in verse that describes a route that is, in James Kenney's words, comprised of "ordinary irregularities" (47).

This caveat notwithstanding, Kelsey displays considerable rhetorical skill that is worthy of attention and the place of rank that Bentley gives the poem. In particular, Kelsey shows a remarkable ability to turn conventional tropes into suitable vehicles to represent the quality of the country through which he journeyed. The polyptoton of the first line—"Now Reader Read for I am well assur'd"—glides euphoniously on its liquid semi-vowel "r." Even if trilled harshly, Kelsey's *r*s are appropriate sounds to associate with a riverine route that is frequently turbulent; this correspondence between the line's sonic qualities and the terrain described in the poem would have pleased Pope, and, later in literary history, Poe. The second line in the couplet—"Thou dost not know the hardships I endur'd"—also displays a competent antithesis between "well assur'd" and "dost not know," and renders gratuitous any aspersion cast on Kelsey's poetic ability. In light of Kelsey's stylistic resourcefulness, his choice of verse—a decision which has puzzled many—to describe his journey becomes less mysterious: he likely wrote a poem about his journey simply because he was an able versifier. Further, it also suggests that Kelsey wished to represent the land through which he travelled, in a verbal medium—poetry—the physicality of which could be made to match the strong physiographic textures of Precambrian and prairie topography.

Kelsey also displays a remarkable awareness of his role in "Now Reader Read." As his poem unfolds he speaks as a traveller recording incident and impression for a general audience, and, at the same time, he displays his dedication to carry out the orders of the HBC:

> For many times I have often been oppresst
> With fears & Cares y^t I could not take my rest
> Because I was alone & no friend could find
> And once y^t in my travels I was left behind

Which struck fear & terror into me
But still I was resolved this same Country for to see
Although through many dangers I did pass
Hoped still to undergo y^{m}, at the Last (*9-16*)

In this passage, Kelsey reinforces his previous themes of hardship and danger, and, despite his earlier unwillingness to "unfold" the details of his journey, he relates one incident here, that of being "left behind." His report, however, offers only a brief description—"fear & terror"—rather than an extended narrative digression. That Kelsey, in what must seem a literary failing to New, denies himself this opportunity for elaborate storytelling is no surprise from a generical perspective, for his simple descriptions of places and events belong to the tradition of the topographical journey poem. Aubin calls Horace's relation of his trip from Rome to Brindisium the "prototype" of this kind of poem, a format that became very popular in English after 1660 (242). Like Horace's journey poem, Kelsey's compact poem is partly narrative and partly descriptive; its descriptions serve and advance the mercantile interests of the HBC. These descriptions also demand the poem's reader move, in an appropriately perambulatory fashion, through the poem's twists and turns.

Kelsey's admission of being abandoned is a curious one in a document that has his HBC superiors as its intended audience. Perhaps it was an awareness of this one audience that explains why he turns his mind and verse back to company matters in the passage that immediately follows:

> Now Considering y^t it was my dismal fate
> for to repent I thought it now to late
> Trusting still unto my masters Consideration
> Hoping they will Except of this my small Relation
> Which here I have pend & still will Justifie
> Concerning of those Indians & their Country
> If this wont do farewell to all as I may say
> And for my living i'll seek some other way (*17-24*)

Just why Kelsey regarded his occupation lost without the approbation of his HBC superiors is unclear. The HBC correspondence of 17 June 1693, from the committee to Governor Geyer, contains no ominous note. Rather, the HBC expresses some human concern about their employee:

> *we are glad that Henery Kelsey is safe returned & brought a good fleet of Indians downe with him and hope he has effected that wch. he was sent about in keeping the Indians from warring one with another, that they may have the more time to*

> *look after theire trade and bring larger quantity of Furrs and other trad with them to the factory.*
> (Hudson's Bay 187)

Later in the committee's letter, the matter of Kelsey's remuneration arises: "[a]s for the Service Henery Kelsey has done us in travelling up into the Countery You being imediate Judges of his demerits we leave it to your discretion to gratifie him for the same" (Hudson's Bay 194). Because the committee speaks of "demerits" in the context of service and payment due to Kelsey, the word should be taken in its good or indifferent sense as a reference to a meritorious or deserving act. In the absence of any blameworthy act connected with his voyage of 1690-92, Kelsey's vague pronoun reference, "if this wont do," suggests that the immediate grammatical antecedent to "this" is the "small relation" that he "pend." Read in this way, Kelsey is not referring to his employ with the HBC when he writes "And for my living i'll seek some other way"; rather, he appears to be expressing, in a rare moment of jest, that if his poetry "wont do" then he will have to work as a fur-trader instead of a poet. If Kelsey jests then there is all the more reason to suppose that "Reader," like other contemporaneous spatial and descriptive genres such as the country house poem, contains latent traces of popular and epigrammatic wit (Fowler 115).

Thus, the poem's first line ("Now Reader Read for I am well assur'd") may owe something to several epitaphs by John Davies (1565-1618). His Epitaph 59—"Reader, read right / And thou shalt see / Here lies a Myte / Not worth a Cee" (26)—and Epitaph 69—"Good Reader, blesse thee bee assur'd / The Spirit of Sack lies heere immur'd" (1-2)—certainly provide the sound (if not the sense) of Kelsey's first two lines. Charles Cotton (1630-87) opens his Burlesque Upon Burlesque in a way similar to Kelsey: "Reader, read this man" (1). Yet one more possibility is the beginning of "To the Senceles Censurer" by William Goddard (fl. 1599-1615): "Rash Reader, read my / book, and when tis read . . . ." John Taylor (1580-1653), whose widely available and popular travel poems and epigrams are described as the "literature of the streets" by William Henry Irving (158), provides another memorable example of an introductory address to his reader: "To the Good or Bad Reader": "Read well, and then these / following lines are mine, / But read them like a / (Botcher) they are thine" (2). Taylor and the other minor poets would certainly have been as available to Kelsey as canonical authors like Jonson and Shakespeare. These potential echoes of now relatively obscure poets shows that "Now Reader Read" discloses its considerable historical, ideological, topographical, and personal substance through a caliginous intertextual haze. More importantly, however, these possible intertexts show that Kelsey's poem is, at least to some extent, appropriating, adapting, and recontextualizing other texts and genres to suit his experience in Hudson Bay and its hinterlands. If the tone of Kelsey's "if this wont do" is humorous, then New's opinion of the text is further qualified because the demonstrated wit and self reflexivity in this "antiquarian" document shows itself as too subtle for modernist taste to permit hasty evaluations.

III

To read Kelsey's poem as an instance of a genre that strives to represent the characteristics of some particular landscape is to lay considerable emphasis on the role of prosody not only in its descriptive passages but also in its narrative sections:

> In sixteen hundred & ninety'th year
> I set forth as plainly may appear
> Through Gods assistance for to understand
> The natives language & to see their land
> And for my masters interest I did soon
> Sett from y^{e} house y^{e} twealth of June *(25-30)*

Bentley, by arguing that the second line of this passage refers primarily to the poet's style, as well as to "the rough simplicity and physical location of his expedition," suggests a correspondence between the poetic manner and "the mode and destination" of Kelsey's journey ("Set Forth" 16). Following this accurate correlation, Bentley expands "plain style" to include "Kelsey's relatively plain and linear narrative" ("Set Forth" 16). Yet, inasmuch as "linear" suggests the idea of a sequence, an additional description of this poetic manner is necessary because the poem is not a sequential narrative, perhaps because a good deal of difficult Precambrian Shield lies between York Fort and the prairies. John Warkentin's catalogue of this intervening territory—"bare, rugged and igneous and metamorphic rock knobs, rapids-strewn streams, countless lakes, boreal forest, and limited parent material for soil" (viii)—points out the need to read for correspondences between style and route, not just between "mode and destination."[65]

Kelsey's destination, "The Inland Country of Good report," was to be found only by his relinquishing the civilization of "all English" that York offered:

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[65] For example, in his prose journal, for 23 July 1691, Kelsey notes "for all ^{y}t we had passed before was heavy mossy going so in the Evening wee came too dist 30 Mile &

Then up y^e River I with heavy heart
Did take my way & from all English part
To live amongst y^e Natives of this place
If god permits me for one two years space
The Inland Country of Good report hath been
By Indians but by English yet not seen
Therefore I on my Journey did not stay
But making all y^e hast I could upon our way (*31-38*)

Kelsey's "heavy heart" appears to result from relinquishing the civilization of "all English" that York offered; his phrase "up y^e River" is perhaps the source of Germaine Warkentin's allusion to Joseph Conrad's Marlow in her discussion of "Now Reader Read." However, Warkentin invokes Heart of Darkness in her treatment of Kelsey's opening lines because she finds in them the "voice of a teller of tales, a shipboard, night-time voice, that same voice Marlow uses" (108-09). Even though she intends this description to fit some of Kelsey's earlier lines, the imperial spirit that pervades Heart of Darkness is analogous to the appropriative ethos of these lines. Certainly, Kelsey's formerly "heavy heart" grows lighter as this passage unfolds; loneliness gives way to a kind of

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nothing to eat but one wood patridge" (KP 4).

self satisfaction that manifests itself by repeated use of the first person to amplify the series of singular achievements attained over the course of the journey.

The most remarkable of these accomplishments follows immediately after Kelsey notes that he left with "all y^{e} hast" for the territory of the Assiniboine:

> Gott on y^{e} borders of y^{e} stone Indian Country
> I took possession on y^{e} tenth Instant July
> And for my masters I speaking for y^{m}, all
> This neck of land I deerings point did call (*39-42*)

Bentley's commentary on "This neck of land I deerings point did call" emphasizes that this line's "unusual regularity and smoothness . . . set it off from its surroundings as a point of special interest both commercially and poetically" ("Set Forth" 20). In the phrase, "set it off," Bentley offers a point worthy of discussion, particularly because Kelsey's entire passage works to name and claim land.

When topographical poetry refers to some "particular landscape" it does so by marking and then making that place different from other places. This process of referring to and describing the object world founds itself upon a governing intention of differentiation. With respect to differentiation, Kelsey displays a set of locational politics that unfold by shifting the rather indefinite "Inland Country" to the more definite "Stone Indian Country" in order to make that land the property of the HBC by creating an outpost, albeit in name only, of Englishness at "deerings point." This move from the general to the specific pinpoints one of the ways in which topographical writing serves to orient its reader by locating places. Location, as discussed in the previous chapter, becomes both a site, and a situation. Kelsey's poem shows possibly the first incidence of a specific European claim on the interior of Canada. This event owes much to the historical circumstances of Kelsey's journey, for E.E. Rich notes that between 1690 and 1692 the HBC was "most purposefully organised" to expand its trade inland and to resist French encroachment on the Bay (300). On the one hand, this dual agenda was consistent with what Rich calls a "friendly and progressive Indian policy," and, on the other hand, it explains, at least in part, why this "friendly" policy was so intent on claiming land.

"Deerings point," in the context of the HBC's dual French and Indian policies, thus cannot be viewed as an innocent instance of place naming. Rather, the place itself should be viewed within a conceptual paradigm such as the one that Lukerman posits. The place, rendered as "deerings point," thus also becomes a cultural concept, here an imperial British one, in which the site becomes a scene for power and domination to occur. Admittedly, Kelsey's act led only later to domination; however, his very journey and his poetic mapmaking place deerings point into a framework of *circulation* by connecting it to York Fort and the system of economic transfer between "all English" and the Stone Indians.

Kelsey displays his own awareness that one of the key functions of his journey was to create patterns of circulation of trade goods between the interior and the Bay. His measurement of six hundred miles is only rough, but by choosing to include this estimate of the distance from the "house" which he departed and the "neck of land" he claimed, Kelsey offers one of the first instances of using the imperial gauge of the mile and the British tradition of iambic couplets to give shape to what was then terra incognita:

> Distance from hence by Judgement at y^{e} lest
> From y^{e} house six hundred miles southwest
> Through Rivers w^{ch} run strong with falls
> thirty three Carriages five lakes in all
> The ground begins for to be dry with wood
> Poplo & birch with ash thats very good

For the Natives of that place w^{ch}, knows
No use of Better than their wooden Bows (*43-50*)

This terse but dense passage describes the route between York Fort and a site that is likely very close to what is now The Pas, Manitoba. More than any other passage of his poem, these lines recall a point made earlier, that Kelsey invites his reader to read for correspondences between his style and route, not just between "mode and destination" (viii). The most conspicuous evidence of such similarities between poetry and passage appears in syntactical variety— "Nor wilt thou me believe without y^{t} thou had seen / The Emynent Dangers that did often me attend" (*4-5*). In other words, Kelsey frequently varies his syntax in order to adapt his sentence to his surroundings, even at the expense of flaunting late seventeenth-century syntactical principles. As discussed by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), these precepts, especially the need for linear coherence in the sentence (the "period"), are worth quoting at length:

> For the order of words, when placed as they ought to be, carries a light before it, whereby a man may foresee the length of his period, as a torch in the night shews a man the stops and uneveness of his way. But when plac'd unnaturally, the Reader will often find unexpected checks, and be

> forced to go back and hunt for the sense, and suffer much unease, as in a Coach a man unexpectedly finds in passing over a furrow. (69)

Kelsey, by choosing inversion as one of his favourite poetic devices, shows considerable, but, perhaps, fitting disregard for such smooth passage. Thus, his frequent syntactical dislocations, more appropriately called hyperbatic word order—υπεβάτον, "stepping over" in Greek—mimic his journey and so match the line of the poem with his line of travel and its frequent surmounting of obstacles: "Through Rivers w^{ch} run strong with falls / thirty three Carriages five lakes in all" (*45-6*). Letting his 'foot' fall in consecutive dactyls, "thír ty three | cár riag es," Kelsey runs together subject matter and meaning; combined with a momentary shift from pentameter into tetrameter in line forty-five, this aspect of metre achieves the variety and energy appropriate to the energy required to follow his upriver route. Moreover, as it happens, Hobbes's simile of horse-drawn privacy and comfort opposes the metonymic burden signified by so many (thirty-three) "Carriages" and in Kelsey's earlier assertion: "For many times I have often been oppresst / With fears & Cares y^{t} I could not take my rest" (*9-10*). Kelsey's choice of the term "carriage" rather than "portage" also calls attention to another very important process whereby English was imported and adapted in order to measure and produce the space of Canada. When it is remembered that Kelsey was indentured to the HBC and that portages were one of the most psychologically and physically strenuous hardships endured by the working classes of the fur trade, his description takes on an added perspective, one that indicates and anticipates the symbolic and pragmatic role that the *voyageur*, the *coureur de bois*, and the Orkneyman would later play in Canada's formation and imagination.

In addition to these effects of metre and diction, other aspects of Kelsey's verse "run strong" in sound and meaning. For example, "carriage" suggests its cognate, "carrack," a vessel dedicated especially to commerce and war. Hudson Bay was, after all, during the years 1689 to 1697, the theatre for several Anglo-French naval battles over the right to carry off the fur trade riches of the lands draining into this mediterranean sea. The Bay was the centre of transportation in interior Canada (and remained so up until the 1920s) by virtue of its rivers, which were (and are) the spokes of this hub. "Carriages" thus suggests several other cognates ("carrake" or "carryk") which are the "carrick" in the term "carrick bend," the knot used to join the ends of two large ropes; Kelsey's "thirty three

Carriages" bind waterways together in much the same way, and his specific mention of the numbers of both lakes and carriages is sufficient to remind his reader that topographical reference includes topology, the science of places, which also has a tributary of inquiry issuing from the mathematics of knots.[66]

If rivers can be likened to ropes (a braided stream) that twine the "Country" together, the similitude apparently was not lost on at least one Confederation poet, Duncan Campbell Scott. In his portage poem, "The Height of Land," Scott represents the portage as a real and symbolic vinculum joining the North and the South in Canada: "Upon one hand / The lonely north enlaced with lakes and streams / and the enormous targe of Hudson Bay / . . . On the other hand / The crowded southern land" (57). Such associations are not only allusive and imaginative but also strengthened, perhaps fortuitously, in Whyte's poem where "time vanishes in the flow of metaphor" (30). In the flux of "simultaneity" and "similarity," Whyte encourages his reader to engage in toponymic fancy and remember that Kelsey's manuscript was discovered at *Carrick*fergus and

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[66] Some warrant for these connections exists in Kelsey's nautical training and ability. His efforts at rescuing an HBC ship grounded at Albany in 1711 are especially

"plucked into the present / from behind grey castle walls / bleak backdrop to Irish fields (31).[67] These suggestive sounds and meanings demonstrate the overlooked imaginative free play in Kelsey's seemingly plodding topographical text.

Any attempt to connect Scott, Whyte, or other recent poets to Kelsey is, of course, a readerly effort aimed at extending the intertextual web of poetry in Canada; Roland Barthes describes this kind of reading as a move from "work to text," from a "fragment of substance, occupying a part of the space of books" to "a methodological field" (156-57). Because Kelsey's text is allusive and elusive enough to allow such a reading practice, it raises the question of its status as verse or doggerel. It is to be hoped that the discussion has, by this point, proven that Kelsey's text is richly associative. Moreover, although Kelsey's couplets occasionally appear rough, they do not rhyme or scan in forced ways. Indeed, the rhythm in Kelsey's poetry, like his route, can hardly be called monotonous, trivial, or sentimental. Even to adopt Frye's paradigm, which speaks

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indicative of his skill as a mariner (KP 79-80).

[67] "Carrick" in this instance means "rock of Fergus;" the name of the seaport (just northeast of Belfast) commemorates King Fergus who was shipwrecked off the coast *c.* 320 A.D.

knowingly (impossibly so) of the conscious and subconscious, Kelsey's use of "carriage" with its nautical resonances and cognates suggests that his poem is not doggerel, what Frye calls "stupid poetry" (Anatomy 277). Put another way, Kelsey's poem cannot be called doggerel (at least in Frye's schema) because its rich associations overcome what only an unappreciative reader would call a "prose initiative" at work in the verse (Anatomy 277).

Of course, it is not necessary to read Kelsey's poem only for its deeper, allusive currents to appreciate it. Kelsey's use of "thirty three Carriages five lakes in all" also belongs to a very particular historical and geographical context. The five lakes themselves are more than likely those of the so-called "Middle Track," the principal route used by the Assiniboine to travel from the prairies to York Fort. The lakes (Knee, Oxford, Walker, Cross, and Moose), because they are real world referents, and because they belong to the area Kelsey travelled, allow a highly probable reconstruction of Kelsey's route to the Saskatchewan River, near the Pas. Although in Kelsey's time the HBC was not yet actively trading in the parkland and boreal forest of the western interior of Canada, by naming the number of portages he was speaking a very precise language that his superiors understood, one of "costly chokepoints, part of a constellation of economic and logistical hurdles to be overcome" (Decker and Freeman 35). Thus, the unpunctuated caesura that occurs between "Carriages" and "five lakes in all" adumbrates well the sense of arrest to progress that the need for a carriage presents. In other words, Kelsey's description of the route is also an economic reference, a code of knotty factors concerning his route addressed to the Factory men: its ability to provide an adequate volume of fur and so defer costs of transport (an enduring concern for Canadian business); its overhead costs; the costs "representing foregone opportunities for expanding trade and profits" (Decker and Freeman 35). Indeed, it might be said that Kelsey's description of his route could have encouraged the HBC to continue its policy of avoiding inland travel by keeping to its Bayside posts until competition forced it inland nearly a century later, in the 1770s. Perhaps apparently incidental in themselves, such matters shaped the economic geography of Canada. Indeed, "Now Reader Read" stands as a paradigmatic text because it represents Canada in terms of its geography and its attendant transportation problems.

IV

Kelsey's text, in addition to its focus on the topographical, does, as New fails to appreciate, have significant references to "character and episode":

> But I had no sooner from those Natives turnd my back
> Some of the home Indians came upon their track
> And for old grudges & and their minds to fill
> Came up with them Six tents of w^{ch}, the kill'd
> This ill news kept secrett was from me
> Nor none of those home Indians did I see
> Untill that they their murder all had done
> And the Chief acter was he y^{ts} called y^{e} Sun (*53-60*)

Albeit in a compressed fashion, this passage shows the various allegiances and feuds that Kelsey encountered on his route; as well, they form a vital component of the topography. Bentley notes that Kelsey shows an "urge to treat at least the 'home Indians' as complex rather than simple characters" ("Set Forth" 23). Certainly, Kelsey viewed Aboriginals as potential trading partners and allies; indeed, the whole of Kelsey's journal (and career for that matter) depended upon guidance from the "home Indians" and upon co-operation in matters of trade from the other groups he met. Paradoxically, in a document that records a series of appropriative acts, a model of collaboration between Natives and Whites can be found, one worthy of recollection.

These elements of "character and episode" must be held in tension with the poem's factual elements. In this respect, Bentley offers possible sources, influences, as well as intertexts, and attends to Kelsey's "denotative style" that operates "referentially, economically, without much embellishment" ("Set Forth" 16-17). Germaine Warkentin's treatment of Kelsey contains a similar negotiation of literary and extraliterary elements. She finds an element of "pure information" (105) in Kelsey's poem at the same time that she says it sounds like "professional story-tellers" whom Kelsey may have heard in Greenwich or London before being apprenticed to the HBC and "Huck's Mr. Twain" (109).[68] Most tellingly, she notices the disjunctions of genre in Kelsey's text: "tale-teller and scientific observer are one in the same" (109). The combination of fact and fiction in Kelsey's text derives from its double mode of reference, to the object world of

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[68] In a wry note, ("Set Forth" 28 n17), Bentley finds Kelsey's "matter-of-factness" similar to Mark Twain's Huck Finn because the former's callousness—"to day our hunters kill'd 9 patridges one Indian dyed fetcht wood home" (KP 40)—recalls that of Huck. Bentley quotes from Kelsey's journal of "wintering by gods assistance at Hayes river" in 1696 (KP 29).

"small nutts with little cherryes very good" (*64*) and to the intertextual world of discourse in its opening address, "Now Reader Read for I am well assur'd." Thus, "Now Reader Read" will confound the interpreter interested only in matters of fact; such readers betray anxiety over Kelsey's choice of poetry to describe his travels. One of the most explicit such statements is Victor Seary's commentary on Kelsey:

> his story is vague, at least partly because he chose to record his wanderings in very bad verse . . . the forced rhymes, the frequent use of inappropriate or incorrect words, blurred his images and obscured his records so that we are not able to determine just where he did go. (25)

Seary, like New, misses much of the referential nuance at work in the poem. Both overlook the manner in which Kelsey presents his reader with a mixture of genres and a corresponding web of interpretive possibilities. Generically, at the most broad conception of it, the poem negotiates between fact and fiction. "Reader," of course, is neither strictly fiction nor nonfiction, but care must be taken not to dismiss the poem merely because its main burden is representational. Lawrence Buell locates two particular perils in approaching realist texts; both are derived from the idea that writing is a "construct" (85). This emphasis on the ability of language to refer to itself allows a poem like "Now Reader Read" to be dismissed as an "artifact" or as a "discourse" (85). Buell's point, that "literary theory has been making the idea of a literature devoted to representing factical reality seem quaintly untheoretical" (86), is particularly pertinent in relation to Kelsey's "loosely reportorial" text (New 24).

Buell's term, "untheoretical," displays another unstated hierarchy at work in contemporary literary criticism, namely the priority given to theory, particularly to theory that foregrounds language as a construct. This state of affairs often results in readings that fail to appreciate the referential and representational burden of a text such as Kelsey's. For example, his description of the grasslands deserves considerable attention:

> So far I have spoken concerning of the spoil
> And now will give acco^{t}. of that same Country soile
> Which hither part is very thick of wood
> Affords small nutts wth little cherryes very good
> Thus it continues till you leave y^{e} woods behind
> And then you have beast of severall kind (*61-66*)

Even though Kelsey is the agent of an imperial and mercantile power, this passage demonstrates his healthy respect for the difficulty of carrying out an altogether imperial agenda:

> The one is a black a Buffillo great
> Another is an outgrown Bear w^{ch}, is good meat
> His skin to gett I have used all y^{e} ~~means~~^^{ways} I can
> He is mans food & he makes food of man (*67-70*)

This description is almost certainly that of the then much more extensive grizzly bear.[69] Prosodically, Bentley notes that the straddled adjectives of the last line demonstrate wit, polish, and eloquence ("Set Forth" 24). Undeniably, this passage is one of Kelsey's most striking. Yet, it contains more than a poetic effect. In its seemingly trivial and direct depiction of the grizzly, this reference functions in a manner similar to that which Norman Bryson locates in still life painting. As Bryson argues, the depiction of nonhuman objects is a way of achieving a "renunciation of normal human priorities" (63). Because Bryson's reasoning pits nonhuman representation in still life against the anthropocentricism of the higher genres, it suggests a correlative contrast between the representation of place in topographical writing and the priority given to character and episode in the higher genres such as the novel or narrative poetry. Bryson's argument focuses on genre; still life "assaults the centrality, value and prestige of the human subject" (64). Although "assault" indicates a rather radical conflict, Bryson's point, in so far as it applies to a descriptive genre like topographical poetry, reveals the excessive privilege granted to the 'higher' literary genres that depict human subjects.

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[69] Henry Epp states that Kelsey encountered the now extinct

Seen from Bryson's perspective, Kelsey's depictions of the prairies interrogate Kamboureli's assertion that early poetry from Canada "embraces a reality that it does not intend to enunciate, in fact fails to acknowledge, an indigenous Canadian aesthetic" (17). Kamboureli's "aesthetic" derives from a conviction that poetry functions only discursively, not representationally. In other words, the referent in Kamboureli's view is textual, not quotidian. Yet, Kelsey's text shows that his attempts at description do not display a complete rupture between text and world. His ordinary reference to "a black a Buffillo great" or to "an outgrown Bear" leaves little room to

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Plains grizzly bear (36).

question the reality enunciated. Indeed, Kelsey's descriptions indicate that our academic culture needs to grow in topographical literacy before making hasty assertions about an "indigenous Canadian aesthetic." Kelsey's modest array of poetic effects shows him aiming to adapt poetry to Canada, not just to import and implant ideology. As Bentley says, "it is not difficult to see here what can be seen in more recent poetry and painting from the Prairie provinces: a minimalist, and . . . nearly abstract style that corresponds especially well to the western plains" ("Set Forth" 25). A careful reading of his style will credit Kelsey's poem with an aesthetic realism that counters the "fallacy of derealization" (Buell 111). According to Buell, this error understands art only as a discursive function "carried on within social 'spaces,'" but, as Buell points out, the contrary evidence is as simple as breathing subzero air" (111). Indeed, Kelsey's hope to be "free from hunger & from Cold" (7) bespeaks an aesthetic grounded in experience and a reality not embraced but endured.

Little wonder then, that Kelsey's poetic idiom so aptly represents the quiddity of the prairies:

> This plain affords nothing but Beast & grass
> And over it in three days time we past

getting unto y^{e} woods on the other side
It being about forty sixe miles wide
This wood is poplo ridges with small ponds of water
there is beavour in abundance but no Otter
with plains & ridges in the Country throughout
Their Enemies many whom they cannot rout
But now of late they hunt their Enemies
And with our English guns do make y^{m}, flie (*73-82*)

Read topographically, Kelsey's conjunctions accomplish more than simple co-ordination—"Did take my way & from all English part" (*32*)—and subordination—"Although through many dangers I did pass" (*15*). Kelsey also employs merismus, a specialized form of co-ordination. He displays this trope in his descriptions of his emotions—"fears & cares" (*10*), "fear & terror" (*13*)—and of himself "obedient & faithful" (*90*) to create brachylogous phrases pregnant with meaning. In some instances, these doublets might be called hendiadys and so rendered into single ideas—'terrible fear,' 'faithfully obedient,' or even 'obediently faithful.' Kelsey's topographical idioms—"Poplo & birch" (*48*) . . . "Beast & grass" (*73*) . . . "plains & ridges" (*79*)—cannot be rendered into single ideas, however, for these substantives allow no such yoking.

The "Beast" of Kelsey's phrase "Beast & grass" is what he earlier called "a black a Buffillo great" (67). Discussing the "Beast," MacLaren says that the "buffalo acts synecdochically: the buffalo *is* the prairie" ("Buffalo" 84).[70] Although this equation of fauna with flora is suggestive, it overlooks how merismus differs from synecdoche; the former typically uses two named species to exhaust the whole genus, and the merismus assumes the form of a polar expression (Honeyman 14). Meristic expressions like 'young and old' or 'great and small' thus refer generally to everyone, regardless of rank or of age. The idiom's difference from synecdoche is subtle, but, considered topographically, the distinction is important. Meristically speaking, the buffalo is not the prairie; rather, the prairie is a more complex and rich blend of herb and herbivore. "Beast and grass" does not depict the totality of the prairies, but, like "young and old," the two substantives function to suggest the whole of an extremely complex and diverse ecosystem. In light of George Puttenham's personification of merismus, "the distributer," Kelsey's use of the device is all the more appropriate because, for the sake of rhetorical amplification, it casts a broader referential net than does synecdoche (230). Together, the two nouns suggest biotic richness and abundance; they also appear to contradict the convention of the empty landscape with which Kelsey begins the poem: "Thou dost not know the hardships I endur'd / In this same desert where Ever y^{t} I have been" (*2-3*). "Desert" is, perhaps, as Bentley suggests, a "commonplace" designed to generate feelings of "empathy, belief, and trust in its audience" ("Set Forth" 14-15). However, "desert" and "beast and grass" may just as likely suggest that Kelsey found no "drugs, Dying Commodities whether in Roote or floure" and no "mineralls" in "that vast tract of ground" (HBC Governor Marleborough, Hudson's Bay 115). It must be remembered that in the 1690s fur was at a very low price, a slump only exacerbated by the economic and territorial battles between the British and the French. In the face of thin profit margins, Kelsey's topographical descriptions of the prairies may just as easily express a conviction that many hold today: the grasslands better suit cultivation and husbandry than exploitation for "mines, minerals, and drugs" (Davies, "Kelsey" 309).

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[70] See MacLaren, 79-129, especially 84-85, on Kelsey's

As an idiom, merismus belongs particularly to the Bible, a source that Whillans and Bentley find echoes of in

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account of bison.

Kelsey's poem. Indeed, one might say that merismus is the enabling trope of the creation account in Genesis because it so elegantly puts contrasting elements into a whole.[71] For example, "the heaven and the earth" figures forth the entire creative fiat, all creation. Likewise, Kelsey's concise descriptions of grasslands, although minimal, are not insignificant; rather, they prompt their reader to imagine an immense organic realm—the essential prairie—lying inland from the Bay. The descriptions clearly belong to an explorer-poet because they issue, if not from the ground itself, from the perspective of one travelling that ground viewing a world comprised fundamentally of "plains and ridges."

To connect Kelsey's use of merismus to the book of Genesis is not necessarily to suggest that he becomes, as Whyte argues, an Adamic figure in a primordial New World ("Cosmos" 272), and to find a determining link between Kelsey's environment and his poetry is neither environmental determinism nor what Leon Surette calls "topocentric mysticism" (47). Rather, to note the correspondence between an elemental landscape and a simple trope is to affirm the relationship between text and world. Finding such a relationship, however, is not to assume that Kelsey (or any other topographical writer) faithfully renders what is "there." Not only is Kelsey, as Bentley calls him, "homo mercantile" but also he is "homo faber" because the place he describes is a social product, fabricated to a large extent by his allegiance to the HBC's mandate of expanding its fur-trade interests. It comes, therefore, as no surprise that Kelsey's perspective is often utilitarian and imperial, particularly in relation to land and place. The most striking instance of his role in shaping the social landscape of Canada arises from his act of taking "possession" of the "stone Indian Country":

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[71] See Harrison, 460, 556, for a discussion of the importance merismus plays in the Genesis narrative; Honeyman's discussion, in particular 14-18, deals with the

> Gott on y^e borders of y^e stone Indian Country
> I took possession on y^e tenth Instant July
> And for my masters I speaking for y^m, all
> This neck of land I deerings point did call
>
> (*39-42*)

This passage appears to refer to Kelsey's first summer inland because when he next refers to "deerings point" it is "after the frost":

> At deerings point after the frost
> I set up their a Certain Cross

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use of merismus in Hebrew.

> In token of my being ~~their~~ there
> Cut out on it y^e date of year
> And Likewise for to veryfie the same
> added to it my master Sir Edward deerings name
> So having not more to trouble you wth all I am
> Sir your most obedient & faithfull Serv^t. at
> command
> HENRY KELSEY (*83-90*)

Both of these passages refer to a *topos* that is at once quotidian and intertextual, for rhetorically they form a *koinos topos*, or commonplace that persuades by alluding to the Matthean "good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:14-30). Admittedly Kelsey characterizes himself as "obedient" rather than "good," but this restyling is an expected one in a document that addresses a set of HBC superiors. Because the act of planting the cross mobilizes both a familiar biblical allusion and the name of Sir Edward Dering it makes an abstract space into a place. Explaining this distinction, Buell notes that "place is perceived or felt space, space humanized" (253). In Kelsey's poem the act of rendering the strange familiar is accomplished by means of a toponym that changes "this neck of land" into "deerings point"; by means of the emblematic cross Kelsey visually and linguistically renders the spot familiar to himself.[72] The profound ideological significance of these transformations is displayed, albeit unintentionally, in Edward Relph's observation that "the meaning of places may be rooted in the physical setting and object and activities, but they are not a property of them—rather they are a property of human intentions and experiences" (47). Although Relph intends "property" to refer to a trait or characteristic, its apposition with "places" indicates that legal matters are never far from view with the matter of land: ideologically and legally, Kelsey's "intentions and experiences" are property making (47). When his adverb "there" replaces the erased homonym "~~their~~," Kelsey effectively displays the transposition (dispossession and possession) of the "Inland Country of Good report" into a dominion of the HBC. Whether the error in the manuscript is homographic or homophonic it highlights the imperial intent latent in the earlier couplet: "The Inland Country of Good report hath been / By Indians but by English yet not seen" (*35-6*). Kelsey's now obsolete name, deerings point, for a now uncertain location shows also that places, as they exist in topographical writing as well as in our experience, are constantly emerging or becoming. In other words they exist in time as much as in space—they thus have a historical component (Lukerman 170).

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[72] See Whillans, 55-56, for a discussion of how "deerings point" (also called "Wa-pas-kwa-yaw" in Kelsey's journal) became known as The Pas. Like many other aspects of Whillans' work on Kelsey, this reconstruction is overly speculative.

To underrate a text like "Now Reader Read" either as artifact, as New does by noting its "antiquarian" appeal (42), or as discourse, as Kamboureli does by arguing that mimesis in early Canadian poetry functions "ironically" by referring to the discursive tradition of the "Old World" (13-14), is to ignore how topographical poetry represents the world. Both errors can be, to a degree, corrected by remembering that the topographical poet writes out of lived experience with places to create Lefebvre's "affective kernel" of represented and real places. Topographical poetry, particularly that which originates from Canada, because it emphasizes and demonstrates the "affective kernel" of "action" in place of the "incidental meditation" that characterizes the British examples of the form, should be read for its efficacy in rendering the object world sensible, for displaying a topographical imagination that demarcates Canadian space as different. Read with care, the topographical poem cannot be reduced to an image, a symbol, a projection, a persona, an ideological deformation, or even a metrical effect. Although it is all these things, the topographical poem is more; it is also a dense matrix of imagination, textuality, culture, and re-presented *reality*. Indeed, the topographical poem is the Canadian landscape.

Writing in the 1690s, Kelsey, of course, did not employ the term "Canada" for the vast lands draining into Hudson Bay. His phrase, "The Inland Country of Good report" (*35*), is almost certainly an indefinite regional reference; however, "Country" also anticipates the role Rupert's Land later played in the formation of Canada as a geo-political territory. To recall the words by Wallace Stevens at the head of this discussion, Kelsey's poetry represents the world in which we have "come to live." Indeed, it is difficult to imagine, but for Kelsey's topographical poem, a Canada without the supreme fictions of the Bay, the prairies, and the inland country of good report. "Canada" is, thus, an appropriate form of shorthand for Kelsey's place of "Good report," a phrase that suggests that his interest in the land revolved around mercantile goods. The Canada represented is one in which matters of resources, costs, distances, and difficulties of transport figure heavily (if prelusively); yet, Kelsey found something in the place itself, which shows that even an empiricist in the service of an imperialist endeavour can, as Buell avers, turn perception, vision, and description to the service of receptivity, not just dominance (82).

CHAPTER TWO: PART TWO

> All language is vehicular and transitive, and is good, as ferries and horses are, for conveyance, not as farms and houses are, for homestead.
> (Ralph Waldo Emerson 1079)

The uneven and complex ethos of appreciation and imperialism that shapes the landscape of "Now Reader Read" is largely absent from Jon Whyte's Homage, Henry Kelsey. In this poem, Whyte represents Kelsey's voyage from a mythic and nationalist perspective to create an idiosyncratic landscape that is based only loosely on the earlier poem. In his examination of "Now Reader Read," Bentley notes just how much Whyte departs from the attitudes and values of the earlier poem by remarking that it serves only as a "pretext" for Whyte's Homage, which was published in 1981 ("Set Forth" 29 n23). Bentley's observation quite literally applies to the version of Homage in Daniel Lenoski's anthology, a/long prairie lines (1989), in which Kelsey's poem appears as a preface instead of a postscript, as it had in the 1981 edition of Homage. Both arrangements link a pair of companion poems, but even though Kelsey's "Now Reader Read" is the subject of two literary critical studies (one by Bentley and another by Germaine Warkentin), Whyte's poem has yet to receive an extended examination.[73] This neglect inspires the present study, not least because a comparison of the two poems affords a propitious means of placing on view two very different kinds of landscape representation within the same generical register.

I

For a variety of reasons, Homage is an elusive text. One interpretive obstacle involves its physical layout, which includes many double and triple columns of refractory syntactical fragments. The poem is also reasonably lengthy (some seventy pages), and its five parts—"List," "Etomomi," "Nivation," "Flensing," and "Arbor"—leap through various temporal settings, from late pleistocene Canada all the way to the present time of Whyte's composition, with no warning and with very little aid to the reader.[74] Homage also demands that its reader possess detailed information about Kelsey, for much of the poem's meaning lies in the deviations it makes from the facts, such as they are known, concerning the HBC employee. Finally, in addition to placing the whole of "Now Reader Read" at either the beginning or the end of Homage, Whyte also interlards smaller fragments of prose from the commonplace book Kelsey kept throughout his years of service to the HBC. Specifically, Whyte draws from the field notes that Kelsey made during his journey north of Churchill River into the Barren Grounds from 17 June to 8 August 1689. Although these borrowed words are nearly always identified by italics, Whyte does not consistently distinguish his writing from Kelsey's. Any analysis of Homage, then, would benefit from an interpretive guide and an organizational plan for discussion. Fortunately, Whyte provides both of these in the preface to The Fells of Brightness: Some Fittes and Starts (1983), a poem he published two years later. In these helpful remarks, he describes Homage as a poem incorporating "history, myth, landscape, [and] a literary past" (8). By discussing each of these terms, the present study will develop an exposition of the ways in which the British mercantilism and imperialism of Kelsey's poem are restructured by Whyte's regional pride and his desire to secure a unique cultural origin and identity for western Canada. This analysis will eventuate in a deliberation on the generical name, "anatomical epic," that Whyte gives to Homage (Fells 8). It is the purpose of this final section to relate Whyte's anatomical epic to Kelsey's topographical journey poem in order to examine the ideological work that Homage effects.

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[73] I am grateful to the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies for allowing me to examine Jon Whyte's literary papers and permitting me to cite them here.

[74] All citations of Homage are taken from the 1981 edition.

II

As the honorific title of Whyte's poem indicates, its historical subject is Henry Kelsey. Whyte's interest in Kelsey, however, is restricted to the putatively heroic nature of the inland journey the fur trader made between 1690 and 1692. It must be remembered, however, that the central motive behind Kelsey's journey—what he called his "masters interest"—was the late seventeenth-century slump in fur prices that continuous economic and territorial battles between the British and the French exacerbated (KP *29*). Concerned about its thin profit margin at forts like Churchill and York, the HBC wanted to expand its interests beyond furs, to mines, minerals, and drugs (Davies, "Kelsey" 309).[75] Evidence connecting Kelsey's journey to HBC economics appears in a letter dated 21 May 1691 in which Governor Marleborough and the Committee at Hudson's Bay House wrote to Governor Geyer at York Fort:

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[75] The slump in the price of beaver became significant in 1686. For a discussion of the HBC's tenuous financial condition from 1688 to 1696 see Davies, Introduction xxxvi-lxii. The rivalry between the English and the French broke into open war in 1689; Davies also provides a concise treatment of the effects of war upon the HBC's trade and finance (Introduction, xiii-xxi).

> [Y]ou will doe well to consider the great Losses we have sustained & the extravigant Rate we pay for our Commodities, Every thing being dearer then formerly besides the extraordinary expence wee are at in sending you goods the charge being neare Treble, from whence you may urge to the natives the great difficulties wee undergoe to come to them, & Therefore ought to allow more Beavor in truck for our goods then heretofore, which we hope you will endeavour to your utmost to effect. (Hudson's Bay 114-15)

In the intervening material, Governor Marleborough remarks that beaver is currently at a very low price. He continues:

> we Cannot but againe Recommend to you the searching out & discovery of all maner of drugs, Dying Commodities whether in Roote or floure Likewise all mineralls hopeing at last in that vast tract of ground, You may find by the Indians or your owne industry, something that may turne to accompt, & *are glad, you prevailed with Henery Kelsey to undertake a Journey with the Indians to those Remote parts hopeing the Encouragemt. you have given him in the advance of his Sallery will Instigate other young men in the factory to*

> *follow his example.* (Hudson's Bay 115; my emphasis)

The HBC correspondence that pertains to Kelsey's journey speaks the discourse of mercantilism: extravagant rates, extraordinary expenses, truck, goods, commodities, charges, quantity, prices, and wages—all are focused on that "vast tract of land" and the hope that "something may turne to accompt." Governor Marleborough's pleasure over Kelsey's departure verifies a point made earlier by way of Rich's notice that between 1690 and 1692 the HBC was "most purposefully organised" to expand its trade inland and to resist French encroachment on the Bay (300). This point also recalls Kelsey's imperial action at "deerings point" of planting a cross to declare HBC ownership of the "stone Indian Country" (KP 39).

Bentley calls this cross "a palimpsest of indigenous materials and imported words—a Christian and commercial marker constructed of a local wood and overwritten with imperialistic information" ("Set Forth" 10). This kind of analysis, which might be even more pointed, was evidently not a part of Whyte's response to Kelsey's poem. Rather than examining the ideology at work when Kelsey "took possession" of the land, Whyte asks to what extent the land took possession of Kelsey. This perspective must be emphasized, for it reveals why Homage devotes so little attention to Kelsey the man and so much attention to the land that he travelled. For this paradigmatic shift to occur—from the biographical to the topographical—Whyte invokes a mythic understanding of Kelsey, one that has at least some documentary basis.

III

The so-called 'Kelsey legend' forms a significant part of Homage. Two of Kelsey's near contemporaries, the previously mentioned Arthur Dobbs, and a second individual, James Robson, are identified with the fable. Dobbs, an Irish colonial administrator, economist, writer, and governor of North Carolina from 1754 until 1765, attempted during most of the 1740s to subvert the HBC charter by arguing that the company had not sufficiently ventured to discover a Northwest Passage. These allegations culminated in 1749, when a committee of the House of Commons was struck to deliberate on the right of the HBC to hold its charter and monopoly. One of the key pieces of evidence entered in the defence of the charter was the journal in which Kelsey documented his inland journey of 1690-92.[76] Although the Committee decided in favour of the HBC, and even though

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[76] Kelsey's name appeared first before the Committee of the

Dobbs appeared to let the matter drop, a book written by Robson in support of Dobbs's position was published in London in 1752. Robson's Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's Bay contains two parts: an account of life on Hudson Bay and a collection of six appendices. Appendix I—"A Short Account of the Discovery Hudson's Bay; and of the Proceedings there Since the Grant of the Hudson's Bay Charter"—spends its sixty-four pages attacking the HBC and the veracity of Kelsey's journal.

Although Robson claimed that his Account relied on firsthand experience and on verbal reports given to him by other HBC employees, Glyndwr Williams has demonstrated that, in all likelihood, Dobbs, not Robson, was the author of Appendix I, and that Dobbs also revised significant sections written by Robson ("New Light" 132-36). Williams points out that Dobbs was a "discredited authority" because of several failed attempts to find a Northwest Passage and because of several earlier efforts to undermine the HBC ("New Light" 135). According to Williams, Robson provided Dobbs with a cloak of respectability because the former had been in the company's service as a surveyor and "supervisor of buildings" ("New Light" 133). In his Account, Robson (or, more accurately, Dobbs) says that Kelsey took "a great

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House of Commons on 24 April 1749 (Doughty and Martin xii).

delight in the Company of the natives, and in learning their language, for which, and some unlucky tricks that boys of spirit are always guilty of," his superior, Governor Geyer, had disciplined him severely on a number of occasions (72). As a result, Kelsey resented Geyer deeply, and, consequently, "being very intimate with the Indians, took the opportunity of running away along with them" (Robson, App, I 20). After a year or two of absence, Kelsey supposedly returned to York Fort with an Assiniboine wife, with a letter written on birch bark asking for pardon for having run away, and with many tales about his travels. Among these stories was an incident in which Kelsey reportedly killed two grizzly bears, a feat which earned him the name "Miss-top-ashish" or "Little Giant" (72). As well, Robson heard that Kelsey had later made a vocabulary or dictionary of "Indian language" (72), but the company suppressed this document.[77] According to the Dobbs-as-Robson account, Governor Geyer did not send Kelsey inland; after the fact, the company simply "made a merit" of Kelsey's journey in order to conceal its own failure to explore the vast regions claimed by its charter (Robson, Appendix I

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[77] Wolfart and Pentland, 37-42, argue that the so-called "Bowrey Dictionary," a Cree vocabulary of "seven pages in folio" entitled *A Dictionary of the Hudson's Bay Indian*

20). Following its appearance at the hearing as documentary proof, Kelsey's book disappeared, presumably into the keeping of the HBC; how it came into the possession of Arthur Dobbs, and why it sat in his library until its discovery in 1926, 161 years after his death, are questions that remain unanswered.[78] Nevertheless, with the publication of The Kelsey Papers in 1929 the more glamorous version of Kelsey's journey lost any credibility.

Before 1929 accounts of Kelsey's journey rehearsed his heroism. For example, in 1926, Robert Watson describes Kelsey as a "high-spirited youngster" who ran away from York after he received a "thrashing" from the governor of the fort. Watson writes that Kelsey returned to York Fort "dressed as an Indian brave, with an Assiniboine woman as his wife" (101). Over the course of his journey, the boy had become "a man, keen-eyed, strong, active and bronzed as any Indian"; Watson also notes that in an encounter with two grizzly bears, Kelsey had "almost lost his life in defence of the Indians who had accompanied him" (101). Bentley's response to Kelsey's apocryphal exploits, "shades

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Language, was compiled by Kelsey (37).

[78] If, as Williams observes, the manuscript found in Castle Dobbs was in the hands of Dobbs before 1752, it says "little for his veracity, and much for his unscrupulousness" ("Kelsey" 22).

of Paul Bunyan, Daniel Boone, and others," suggests some of the allure behind this legendary Kelsey ("Set Forth" 27 n9). Whyte certainly felt this attraction, for he makes sure his hero, "Miss-Top-Ashish / Little Giant / Henry Kelsey," is untainted by the pecuniary motives of the HBC (Homage 15).

In spite of the fact that Arthur Doughty and Chester Martin call the Dobbs and Robson tradition "a curious instance of cumulative prejudice and inaccuracy" (xxviii), it supplies Whyte with a hero innocent of imperial designs because its Kelsey is both a self-made man and an innocent boy with only a remote connection to the HBC. All these qualities hold the promise of an autochthonous Kelsey, but his ostensible boyishness figures the most prominently in the myth that surrounds him and in Homage. In Robson's Account (written by Dobbs), the portrait of Kelsey as "a little boy" (72) marks a fair description, perhaps, of the youth indentured to the HBC 15 March 1684 (Davies, "Kelsey" 308).[79] The HBC uses the same sobriquet, "the Boy Henry Kelsey," in its correspondence concerning Kelsey's 1689

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[79] John Warkentin gives Kelsey's age as seventeen (ix); Doughty and Martin state that Kelsey entered the service of the HBC 14 April 1684 at the age of fourteen (xxxvi), an age which makes his birth date correspond, perhaps too fortuitously, with the year when the Hudson's Bay Charter

Churchill River trip. The most reliable information available, however, gives Kelsey's birth date as 1667, making him seventeen when he entered the service of the HBC. Thus, Kelsey was twenty-one when he set out on the Barrens, and he was twenty-three when he departed York for the grasslands that he called "The Inland Country of Good report" (KP 35). Nevertheless, Whyte unproblematically writes of a Kelsey "who in boyish manner set out" on the journey of 1690 to 1692 (Homage 70). It is possible that Dobbs, the HBC, and Whyte are all of them shoddy arithmeticians, but it is more likely that for each the term "boy" is a discursive tic, a wished-for presence, an ideological structure representing innocence and futurity which enables imperialism by masking it behind youthful virtues of impetuosity, spontaneity, purity, strength, and even joy. These values certainly inform Whyte's account of Kelsey in Homage:

> Rarely it is given to a man to find
> a continent to which his homeland's blind,
> and wander in it freely two swift years
> of joy and awe and wonder, yet in fears
> he'll not return; and carefree yet, unheeding
> terror, disentangle what is needing:

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was issued.

commerce, comfort, shelter, peace in the land,
all of which the Indians little understand. (24)

Admittedly, Whyte associates Kelsey with "commerce," but his paratactical enumeration of aspects of innocence—"joy and awe and wonder . . . and carefree"—extols "the Boy Henry Kelsey," a discursive boy, not an historical Kelsey.

Although contemporary reading practices for poems like Homage discourage appeals to history, by 1684 the HBC had formed a regular policy of taking apprentices (so called "Blue Coat Boys") for, as Rich notes, the HBC Committee had "realised that its success in future years would depend on training its own employees" (390). Kelsey was one of ten such apprentices listed in the HBC records for 1684, and Rich's portrait of the ideal outcome of the apprenticeship system, "men who combined knowledge of the Bay with youthful vigour and some capacity for organization" (300), leads toward Bentley's observation that Kelsey's dutiful qualities resemble those of the "mountie, the schoolteacher, and the (rail)road builder . . . the pioneer, the settler, the parson, and the circuit judge" (Gay]Grey 78). Of course, these figures are types, but their work—"taking (British) peace, order, and good government into the hinterland"—recalls the fact that all Kelsey's writings and all the records of the HBC depict him as "devoted and obedient to his aristocratic masters" (Bentley, Gay]Grey 78). Nevertheless, by emphasizing the boyishness of Kelsey, Whyte ensures that his Kelsey is not merely a "transplanted Englishman"; rather, because he is a boy Kelsey is in John Locke's terms a tabula rasa, one that can be overwritten and interpellated not by the imperialism of England or by the HBC but by what Whyte calls the "spirit of the land" (Letter A). In terms of his identity, the Kelsey of Homage belongs to the land itself; he is Canadian.

IV

To advance the idea that the landscape of Canada transforms Kelsey into what he boldly calls the "archetypal western Canadian" in one of his essays, Whyte relies heavily upon a species of environmental determinism ("Cosmos" 272). His term for Kelsey, "archetypal," also indicates that Homage adds a form of psychologism to its environmental determinism. Thus, even though Kelsey had some knowledge of the Cree language, and even though he travelled inland with the Assiniboine (a travelling arrangement which Homage also depicts), Whyte's method of converting Kelsey from an HBC employee into the original Canadian does not involve the Self-Other binary that Terry Goldie uses in his study of "indigenization" (13). Rather, Whyte uses another method to effect change in Kelsey, one which Goldie's work just touches but does not unfold—the use of Carl Jung's ideas (142-43). Put as precisely as Whyte's loose adaptation of Jungian psychology allows: Kelsey does not exchange his identity; he reclaims an identity that is archetypal and timeless because he travels through a primal and timeless land; for this reason, the roles of land, landscape, and Jung in Homage are central and worthy of considerable attention.

Whyte's interest in Jung derives, apparently, from his Master's thesis (1967) which presents a Jungian reading of the anonymous medieval poem, Pearl. In his thesis, Whyte states that the effectiveness of Jung's ideas resides in their "universal and atemporal" qualities (1). These two attributes have special relevance to Homage because they reveal one of its central problematics. The first term identifies the logical consequence of making Kelsey the "archetypal western Canadian" ("Cosmos" 272): the archetype must be effectively universal, for it constitutes the pattern of all subsequent types. The second term implies time, and, therefore, history; it displays the impossibility of creating the universal within a particular historical and spatial context. Nevertheless, Whyte builds Homage upon this very contradiction when he writes that

"Henry Kelsey . . . interested me . . . so I . . . let him become *Adam in a peopled Eden*" ("Cosmos" 272; my emphasis). Obviously, an Adamic Kelsey, who is necessarily first, cannot be the prototypical person in a land already populated with First Peoples. Regardless, the reader of Homage is asked to overlook this very impossibility and to celebrate a myth because it is presented in terms of pristine nature.

The New World makes Kelsey a new man, and his journey has little to do with mercantile exploration and much to do with the gradual reclamation of a lost identity. Whyte's Kelsey begins this process even before he reaches the shores of Hudson Bay:

> Insurgent wave, ocean journey, the hyperboreal
> strait
>
> lost in time   in wilderness
> unending
> lost in world   in time
> expanding
> lost
> becoming
> something other
> forgotten and reclaimed (30)

Chronologically, these lines represent the first phase of Homage because they mark Kelsey's voyage through Hudson Strait, the "hyperboreal strait," into Hudson Bay where the process of "becoming / something other" commences. This passage also displays Whyte's Jungian sensibilities because it demonstrates that Kelsey's "becoming / something other" occurs by means of memory; the memories, of course, are locationally and environmentally specific. Crucially, Kelsey does not exchange an identity; he uncovers what was "forgotten" in "wilderness unending."

Support for this interpretation appears in "Nivation," part three of Homage. While wintering inland, Kelsey falls into something of a dream state, and he recalls a set of archetypal memories that belong to pleistocene Canada:

> The ice plate wanes
> and the mammoths and mastodons, tapirs and
> mylodons,
> tigers and horses fall on the bier of time. (39)

The first line refers to that epochal moment of glacial retreat when the grasslands of Canada became inhabitable, an event that John E. Storer dates at approximately 10,000 years before the present, when many animals such as tapirs, mammoths, and horses were becoming extinct on the grassland steppes (45-46).[80] In effect, this time frame roots Kelsey in Canadian soil because it substitutes prehistory for history, and, by reaching into the origins of human life on the prairies to imbue his hero with archetypal memories, Whyte incidentally, perhaps conveniently, skirts the issue of Kelsey's race.[81] Kelsey is thus no visitor; rather, he is an avatar of ageless firstness. This reading makes sense of the entire movement of "List," the poem's first part, where Canada, or "here," is contrasted with England:

England is an ungava
and in the reek of spring's melting
in summer's florescence
in patch-spotted swathing
in maturing
here is not a land beyond the eye or
memory
in winter's dim and still

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[80] Storer notes that pollen records indicate that the prairies were likely dominated by black spruce very soon after the melting of the ice (45). Whyte appears to conceive of the prairies as always already grassland.

[81] In terms that would likely seem familiar to Whyte, Calvin Luther Martin avers that European desires for indigeneity are not a need for otherness; rather, these urges are manifestations of a deeper need to return to a set of universal palaeolithic roots that supposedly fix all peoples in their correct ecological and spiritual niche

beyond vision's rim
but   here (8)

In this passage, Whyte does not mean Ungava the place because earlier he writes "Ungava / not the land Ungava" (8); rather, as Lenoski notes, the word functions adverbially (60). Whyte thus enlists ungava to express the spatial, temporal, and imaginary disjunction between England and Canada—"ungava / in the eye's lee / until a moment grasps man by his imagination / stretching in yearning relaxing his thoughts" (8). As a result, England fades from view and from mind, and Whyte dismisses the Englishness of Kelsey (8). In these lines, Whyte's characteristic repetition of one word or phrase (anaphora) is also noteworthy, for in this case the preposition "in" functions locatively to emplace Kelsey in Canada. Thematically, the use of anaphora augments the sense of this passage because the trope's meaning ("carrying back" in Greek) echoes the atavistic presupposition previously discussed; namely, Kelsey is not as much going out on a voyage as he is returning home. "Here" is where Kelsey belongs, Whyte says, and he further emphasizes this point by typographically separating "England" from "here."

It is thus less surprising that the section's title

(10-20).

word, "List," enjoins Kelsey to give heed to the voice of the land as it greets him speaking, in Cree no less, of spring:

Seekwan
seek wandering

. . . .

seek wondering

. . . .

Seek wander
and be born again beyond
the sun setting lustwandering
no time for rest
stir, step, stride, walk, wander, follow, pursue,
sequent seekwan (10-11)

In this portion of the poem "List" also echoes the imperative with which Kelsey begins his poem—"Now Reader Read." However, where Kelsey writes "Then up y^e the River I with heavy heart / Did take my way & from all English part" (*31-32*), Whyte sends him "lustwandering" (appropriate for the archaic meaning of "list" in its sense of craving) into another list (the catalogue of locomotive terms), as well as into the arena where a kind of contest (his journey) will take place. Within this imperative, enumerative, and spatial context, the word "seekwan" (Cree for the season of spring) figures the reawakening of Kelsey now that he is beyond England. The homophonic pun that trades English sounds for Cree meaning makes "seekwan" percolate through Whyte's verse, and it enacts the kind of change or transformation posited in Kelsey as he enters the North American continent. The game that Whyte plays within the order of representation (no word or phrase can ever be reduced to a single signification) recalls Frank Davey's premise that so-called "documentary" poems like Homage question historical truth, particularly by offering up another version, or several, of received history ("Recontextualization" 135). Of course, Whyte reads and writes against the grain of history; where Bentley accurately describes Kelsey as the servant of a "residually feudal commercial enterprise" ("Set Forth" 10), Whyte has a chorus invite Kelsey to the land:

> Hail, Kelsey, come: the land is not barren,
> land of the little sticks, caribou lichen,
> musketers only;
> come to the land: the land is not barren,
> . . . .
> come, Kelsey, come to the land. (12)

Although the topographical status of Homage will be discussed in detail in the final section of this chapter, it is necessary to point out here that from his opening lines Whyte casts his poem in a topographical mould. The exclamation, "hail," a commonplace of the topographical poem (Aubin 10), establishes the encomiastic tone that will dominate the rest of the poem. This exclamatory greeting also signals the beginning of another topographical commonplace, that of *patria* and patriotism. The salutation, although it is seemingly directed at Kelsey, is actually topographical even though it is mediated through a biographical register. In order to effect this translation, Whyte creates a series of descriptive tableaux and meditations that depict the changes wrought in Kelsey by his journey. Inexplicably, many of these convey predictable, but contradictory, themes of dislocation and alienation:

In
a forest
of similarities
we find our path by slight distinctions
the aberrant, the taller tree
lush moonferns beside a spring
a slight displacement
a witch's broom
a tree's growth slowed by fire scorch

a line of fire
a paler green in slightly younger spruce
except
when strangers are
in strange uncertainty,
dark forests' certain strangeness,

nothing is knowable
(19-20)

Because these lines form a pattern poem that aspires to iconicity, that is, the eye, not the ear, notes the resemblance between Whyte's words and the object to which it refers—a synecdochal tree becoming forest—the passage demonstrates how mimesis and representation undergird his poetry. This verse picture also works prelusively to signal both the theme and content of "Arbor," the final section in Homage where Kelsey reaches his apotheosis. Ironically, however, where iconic verse means to offer accuracy, the forest that surrounds the Bay—stunted conifers and willows with a tundra-like understorey—scarcely warrants Whyte's calling it "dark" in this passage, or elsewhere to say that Kelsey "ran to the forest darkness" to escape from Geyer (42). Such license in seemingly trivial matters, many would argue, is no license at all, and such punctiliousness arises only because of a refusal to distinguish one discourse from another (Buell 89). Whyte, however, knows his discourses, for he loads Homage with the vocabulary of science. He thus becomes answerable to what Buell calls "dual accountability" where textual representation is "accountable to matter and to discursive mentation" (92).[82] Although it is designed to foster ecocriticism, Buell's paradigm is relevant to topographical poetry because by it he means to create a reading strategy that accounts for two registers of reference. When applied to Homage, Buell's scheme of "dual accountability" provides a means by which to interrogate Whyte's imaginative recreation of Kelsey's route.

In Homage Kelsey is summoned to the land just after Whyte reconstructs one of Kelsey's most probable canoe routes inland, "by the south branch of the middle road . . . (by the Knee, Oxford, Walker, Cross, and Moose)" (11). These five lakes lie along the Hayes River route ("the middle road") from York Factory to Lake Winnipeg, and Kelsey's concise description of this leg of his journey—

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[82] Buell treats a specific discourse, environmental non-fiction; however, his term "dual accountability" is apt for topographical poetry that blends its modes of reference between particular places and the poet's historical retrospection and incidental meditation.

"From y^e house six hundred miles southwest / Through Rivers w^{ch} run strong with falls / thirty three Carriages five lakes in all" (*44-46*)—invites this correlation. Whyte's source for this information is Eric Morse's Fur Trade Routes of Canada, from which he lifts the phrase "the south branch of the middle road" (47). Surprisingly, Whyte modifies the route to include the Echimamish River which lies east and south of the middle track. Although the Echimamish is a significant component of one possible passage through Manitoba, it cannot be included in a route description comprised of "thirty three Carriages five lakes in all" because its use eliminates three of the lakes (the Walker, Cross, and Moose). Whyte's reasons for mentioning the Echimamish likely lie with the Cree meaning of the river's name, "river-that-flows-both-ways" (Morse 40).[83]

The Echimamish, of course, does not flow in two directions simultaneously; rather, its name refers to the fact that this river originates from an interfluve which spills water east into the Hayes River and west into the Echimamish.[84] Because it arises from a divide the Echimamish provides Whyte with a ready metaphor that gives him seemingly unmediated access to Kelsey's historical context, a leap that these lines indicate:

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[83] See Newbury for a discussion of Echimamish and its importance to Natives and explorers seeking passage from Hudson Bay to the western interior.

[84] In his endnote to Homage, Lenoski engenders a good deal

> the Echimamish
> flows both ways
> West to the Nelson East to the Hayes
> in time (11)

The last line of this passage transposes the Echimamish River into a quotidian link between the past and the present—between Whyte and Kelsey. Characteristically, however, Whyte's movement through time does not end when he reaches Kelsey. As the passage continues, Whyte conveys his reader and Kelsey into another primeval scene:

> dawnhunter in barrens
> hunter of mastadon, mammoth
> fear of the soft-stepping tiger

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of confusion over the Echimamish, for in error he says that it has a "characteristic of reversing its direction of flow" (60 n15). He compounds this mistake by saying that the Echimamish connects the Nelson and Hayes Rivers; according to Lenoski, the Echimamish reverses and flows either west or east to the Hayes "depending on which source course is higher" (60 n15). In fact, the Echimamish flows into Hairy Lake, and the stream flowing west from the lake into the Nelson is called Blackwater Creek. The name "river-that-flows-both-ways" describes the normal watershed hydraulics of the marshy area from which the Echimamish originates; this interfluve spills water east into the Hayes River and west into the Echimamish, but no reversal

the giant bear lording his domain
at glacier's toe (12)

This modulation of time (and many others like it) makes Kelsey participate in a free-floating set of archetypal or ancestral memories that belong to the land that is now Canada. Of course, the topographically minded reader of Homage must demur because Whyte's Kelsey reaches the past of Canada by means of a river that flows but one way. Moreover, Kelsey's route description, cryptic though it is, discourages any reconstruction of his itinerary that includes the Echimamish. Perhaps Whyte chose the Echimamish because its name is rich with poetic possibilities. Then again, it is possible that Whyte became disoriented in his attempts to find a path through the maze of lakes and rivers that lie between Hudson Bay and Lake Winnipeg because he lacked the guidance that the Assiniboine provided Kelsey. By failing to be accountable to "matter," to the realities of Kelsey's route, Whyte effectively creates a fabular "wandering" hero, but he overlooks the fact that Kelsey relied almost entirely and unheroically on his guides. In any event, within the world of Homage the Echimamish brings Kelsey to the prairies.

The grasslands, "wide and trackless," effect a

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of current is involved.

profound change in Kelsey; where Whyte earlier writes of Kelsey's disorientation and alienation in the forests, he now predicates Kelsey's mystical rebirth on the grasslands:

> Mind is   prairie
> wide and trackless   earth and air
> overwhelms   inculcate
> us   a calculus of
> despairing   homunculi
> under   accumulate
> clouds (26)

Although these lines appear to echo Kelsey's confusion in the forest—"nothing is knowable"—this passage develops in a markedly new direction:

> prairie is   doubt
> coursed   by rivers
> shaped   by glaciers
> asundered   by wind
> till what is left   diminishes
> is primacy   and rebegins
> (26)

These lines continue the monistic metaphor—"Mind is prairie"—with which Whyte begins this reflection on the grasslands (26). Both metaphors equate mindset to landscape, while erosion, by water, ice, and wind, strips both topographies to their elemental form. According to Whyte, Kelsey's plain style verse thus originates not from the literary conventions of the late seventeenth century, but from the land itself:

> atoms of
> irreducibility
> in
> plain
> force
> what he feels
> prosaically   in poetry
> (26)

As a whole, this passage exhibits Whyte's technical affinities for Kelsey's verse. With "earth and air," he handles the same meristic constructions that Kelsey achieves with "beast and grass"; the "wide and trackless" prairie, however, should be read as hendiadys—'tracklessly wide.' By its sheer span of blank paper between utterances, Whyte's double column layout, what he calls a "technical innovation," suggests the prairies themselves (81). The gap between columns also underscores the syntagmatic simplicity of Whyte's diction, and it invites the reader to regard the page as a picture-space or as a landscape; consequently, the reader is encouraged to proceed associatively down the page, through layers of meaning which can only be guessed once the syntactical flow of the columns is suspended. These two columns, by remaining visually and verbally rudimentary, reinforce Whyte's observation on the correspondence between Kelsey's plain style and the plains environment by reiterating a comparable plain style, a feature of Homage which Bentley calls "under-appreciated" (75). However, Whyte does not simply advance the idea that a stark habitat engenders a plain style; rather, he insists that the prairies strip away Kelsey's former mindset "till what is left diminishes / is primacy and rebegins" (26). The rebeginning, of course, reinforces an archetypal understanding of Kelsey, one in which his speech and his art originate with the land itself. Thus, Whyte adds his own strain of environmental determinism to the enduring belief that the unique topography of Canada produces a unique literature, and, by ensuring that Kelsey gives "utterance" to "poetry" while on the prairies, Whyte displays his own regionalist literary pride.[85] However, in so far as Kelsey inaugurates literary production in Canada, Whyte predicates his definition of Canadian difference upon the idea of locale, with no changes to the notions of form or culture.

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[85] Surette provides an insightful examination of the environmental presuppositions at work in thematic Canadian literary criticism.

Ideologically, by having Kelsey give "utterance" to "poetry" on the prairies, Whyte mobilizes another topographical trope: local pride. The locale, at least in Whyte's description, is surprisingly indefinite: "[s]o—there in Eden (which turns out to be Canada it's no surprise, even with the Tories in rule)—Henry Kelsey stands as archetypal western Canadian" ("Cosmos" 272). His unproblematic parallels between Eden, Canada, and the west of Canada collapse the distinctive region of the prairies into the "west," and they become, finally, as indistinct as Kelsey's rather vague directional markers.

Whyte's emphasis on the prairies, and their effect on Kelsey, is most clearly evident in "Etomomi," part two of Homage. The Etomami River, which is spelled "Etomomi" in the 1981 edition, becomes a key device that Whyte uses to suspend historical time and transform the prairies into a mythical place:

> Etomomi, its two ways clear
> South to Assiniboine, north to Red Deer
>   The river flows both ways
> where it reverses   unexplorably
> shifts

great eddies wheeling
capture flotsam
suspend it at the torrents' edges
an unstill point that stays
borne in current by the current
stilling time in motions' space

. . . .

Time vanishes
Tone slows (30)

The Etomami River, which Kelsey almost certainly travelled, recalls Whyte's previous use of the Echimamish. Located in Saskatchewan, the Etomami runs roughly parallel to Highway 9 between the towns of Usherville and Hudson Bay; like the Echimamish, the Etomami's name—"river-that-flows-both-ways"—comes from the Cree. As with the Echimamish River, there is no warrant for making the river that "flows both ways" into a stream that "reverses." Nevertheless, readers who encounter Homage in Lenoski's anthology are encouraged to accept Whyte's description of the Etomami as literal, for the editorial endnotes extend the meaning of this name to include the idea of a "reversing river" (61 n19). This leap shifts the term's meaning considerably from the correct treatment that Allen Ronaghan gives it: "downstream either way"—"divide" (90).

The Etomami originates from a divide or watershed that involves two lakes, Etomami Lake and Lillian Lake, which are separated by some 1600 metres of marshy ground. From this swampy area some water drains south to Lillian Lake, which empties into the Lillian River, which eventually joins the Assiniboine River, and water drains from this divide north into Etomami Lake, which feeds the Etomami River.[86] Thus, two rivers originate from a single divide, each one entering different trenches of a valley running roughly north and south; the marshy divide between the Lillian and the Etomami is the only body of water that flows "both ways," but this piece of high wet ground is no river.

Whyte's topographical inexactitude seemingly stems from Jungian considerations. That is, when he writes "time vanishes in the flow of metaphor," Whyte refers to enantiodromia, a word that Lenoski comments on in his endnotes to the 1989 edition of Homage (n15 60). This Heraclitean term, which belongs especially to Jung's lexicon, denotes simultaneous and contradictory flow in opposite directions and the process by which something becomes its opposite, as well as the subsequent interaction of the two.[87] With respect to Homage, the enantiodromical process involves transforming Kelsey from a wandering HBC employee into a rooted and flourishing native (in the botanical sense) of Canada.

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[86] See the mapsheet, Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan (edition 2, 63D, 1:250 000 scale in The National Topographic System), for a representation of the topography that determines the

In "Arbor," part five of Homage, Whyte stages this very transformation, and Kelsey reaches his apotheosis. Whyte's own words best explain this part of the poem:

> Kelsey disappears into the landscape and becomes what all Canadians secretly yearn to be: a tree. I take it as a fact we all wish to vanish and turn into part of the land: some of us to become drumlins and eskers, others to become sloughs and bogs, yet others to become mountain ranges and forests and arctic barrens. Americans rarely understand this, I believe. ("Cosmos" 272)

This formulation of national identity builds itself around topography, which is entirely consistent with Whyte's emphasis on landscape throughout Homage. His cultural nationalism, with its emphasis on glacial landforms,

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flow of the Etomami and Lillian rivers.

[87] Jung uses enantiodromia throughout his writings. See his Psychological Types, 425-26, for a more detailed discussion

produces a northern nation predicated on desire that yearns for an organic connection to the land. In Homage this desire literally takes shape under the force of a boreal wind:

> The bent tree
> reveals
> the force of land
> wind
> the climate's aridity
> the snow's depth
> the height of the watertable
> the lenten soil
> roots scrabbling in the mossy
> crack
> Efflorescent the gathering prism,
> the iris dilating
> stares into the crescent tree:
> vascular
> rooted
> branched
> skeletal
> leaflorn
> hydrotropic, heliotropic

---

of the term.

fixed, firm
still
Xylem, phloem, cambium, bark (63-64)

When Whyte makes his Kelsey-tree speak of its identity, "If thou wouldst me define, / seek the blast that has thee bent, / seek the element in which thou grew, / seek the old supporting the new" (63), it displays the natural connections that Whyte wishes to establish between Kelsey and the land of Canada, as well as between our present and our historic, heroic past. It is also no accident that "Arbor" implies roots, which are by definition both radical and original; they anchor Kelsey in the land and secure his identity as the "archetypal western Canadian" ("Cosmos" 272). Yet, the visual quality of the arboreal passage also shows that Kelsey as landscape, although figured as a metamorphosed "primal, sincere, innocent" (but no longer "wandering" hero), cannot be without a subtending set of ideologies. Even shaped into a naturalized landscape, Kelsey cannot be so easily separated from the imperial ideology of the HBC. As W.J.T. Mitchell argues, "like money, landscape is a social hieroglyph that conceals the actual basis of its value. It does so by naturalizing its conventions and conventionalizing its nature" ("Imperial" 5). Thus, there can be no innocent understanding of the linkage Whyte effects between Kelsey, the landscape, and Canada as nation or western Canada as region:

> landscape   delitescent
> diminishing he becomes a giant
> disappearing he dissolves in us
> diverging from horizon   (69)

Although the typographic separation of "landscape" from "delitescent" once again suggests the vastness of the prairies into which Kelsey journeyed, the second term's meaning—to hide, lying hidden, obfuscated, latent, concealed—indicates the hieroglyphic quality of the tree. Moreover, the seemingly natural connection between Kelsey and "us" must be questioned. Indeed, Whyte's predilection for the Dobbs and Robson version of the Kelsey story makes the separation of "landscape" from "delitescent" less of a mimetic gap and more of an erasure of the great difference between Kelsey's historical context and that of contemporary western Canada.

V

Because Kelsey never recorded where or how he spent his winters inland (at least, no such record survives), Whyte has ample room to invent a chapter in Canada's literary past. In particular, the third section of Homage, "Nivation," with its suggestions of sleep and growth, depicts Kelsey wintering and his development into a poet during that time. Whyte creates a meditative Kelsey who looks back, during the winter of 1691, to his Barrens trip of 1689:

> Summer and winter, river and wind:
> I am adrift on smoke;
> wind that between the nunatuks blew
> blows where the ice is gone.
>
> Here Oomingmuk persists the pale red dawn,
> raises the bearded one his hornwall head,
> blue eyes searching through the arctic smoke,
> for over the long night's gulf——
> he hears the rising howl of a wolf. (38)

In this passage, Whyte combines two stable motifs of topographical poetry: retrospection and the hunt. The Barren Grounds are "here," and "Oomingmuk" refers to the muskoxen that Kelsey encountered while there. Whyte takes a fragment from Kelsey's journal of 9 July 1689 and includes it in this portion of "Nivation" to provide a contextual anchor for his ebullient figure, "I am adrift on smoke":

> Setting forward good weather & going as it were
> on a Bowling green in y^{e} Evening spyed two
> Buffillo left our things & pursued y^{m} we Kill'd

> one they are ill shapen beast their Body being
> bigger than an ox. (Homage 38; KP 16-17)

Homage shows this event from the perspective of the muskoxen; by way of zoomorphism it asks "what wolves are these, / striking and biting from unseen hills" (40). The predators, of course, turn out to be Kelsey and Thomas Savage, his companion on the 1689 journey. Although he does not yet explain the significance of this hunt, in order to indicate that Kelsey has undergone a fundamental transformation during his Barrens sojourn, Whyte asks, "Who recognized the stranger returned?" (41).

For the moment, the question remains unanswered, and Kelsey, continuing his winter rumination, lights suddenly and unannounced upon his departure to the interior in 1690:

> Perhaps it should stand: "I ran away."
> It might as well as have been.
> Ran to the mystery the shore concealed,
> ran to the forest darkness, or from Geyer and his punishment,
> as some would say, upon some *Boyish misbehaviour*
> chastised, I fled
> and Geyer made a *Merit* of my *going up*
> which Geyer undertook it was his own idea. (42)

The Kelsey of this passage obviously speaks from the present, but only with limited hindsight. Although Whyte plainly prefers the Kelsey legend, which is alluded to in these lines by the italicized words drawn from Dobbs's allegations against the HBC, it is clear that, with his next utterance, his Kelsey belies all the documentary evidence pertinent to the inland journey: "To him to whom the wind has sung orders mean little" (42). In other words, the wind and the hunt transform Kelsey:

and England
Kelsey, died
in you when you
beheld him
and you *kill'd one*

Oomingmuk lies
unmoving in a puddle of blood
oozing into tundra
redder than lichen
the lichens soaking
a precious wetness

(42-43)

By comparing the muskox hunt to another hunt from "Flensing," part four of the poem, one can appreciate the significance of the words, "and England . . . died." In the second hunt, Kelsey kills and eats a deer:

> Sweat flecks the tawny hide, urging
> the ecstasy the buck dies in, surging
> ecstasy, crumbling on its legs splaying,
> slaughter's dreary darkness replacing
> the surgent rapture
>
> The larynx tightens; the word is drawn back;
> before utterance is thrown, the breath is
> drawn;
> the heart's cords and the hand's tendons
> tighten;
> song brims in the tension of silence.
>
> . . . .
>
> The blade scores the soft belly flesh
> and the guts of the buck spill out;
>
> . . . .
>
> After winter's hunger slaked by small birds only,
>
> . . . .
>
> summer seems good
>
> (48-49)

The "surgent rapture" of the buck is suspiciously similar to one of the most often cited topoi of the topographical genre—the stag that is "glad to dy" in Sir John Denham's

Cooper's Hill (320); more to the point, where Denham's stag hunt prompts many allegorical readings, Whyte, in his letter to Wayne Tefs, explains his own allegory as

> the myth of transference; the spirit of the landscape moving through the beast into the guts of man by his eating the beast seems totemically important for what is transforming in Kelsey, what is making him totemically a citizen of the new world rather than a transplanted Englishman. (Letter A)

By way of the muskox and the deer, Whyte frees Kelsey from complicity in the imperial and mercantile motives of the HBC. Indeed, in the same letter to Tefs, editor of Turnstone Press, Whyte also says that, as the animal is skinned, Kelsey's "hide-bound past" is peeled from him. In other words, Whyte's questing hero is not an HBC man; rather than participating in the mercantilistic ideology of seeking and claiming, he can wander the continent freely for "two swift years of joy and awe and wonder" (24). Free of imperial ideology, Whyte's Kelsey finds his poetic voice, and he concludes his historical retrospection:

> I stand in the haggard wind of winter,
> turbulent air and colder times,
>
> . . . .

the muteness of my mouth where language fell away
from me
until my silence forced me to reach
for any utterance, any speech
my chafed hand might render:
Now Reader Read for I am well assur'd
Winter has forted us, and us immur'd
Thou dost not know the hardships I endur'd
It is a beginning:
the wind is singing
fire is dying:
the voice of the land is the wind,
the wind is the voice of the land, and
when you have heard the wind and its singing
you shall have begun to understand. (43)

Archetypally, this passage is important because it figures forth a prescient Kelsey who sees his own poem, "Now Reader Read," as the "beginning" of a national poetry based upon the "voice of the land." Whyte's explanation of Kelsey's originative role bears out this reading. According to Whyte, Kelsey is

> [o]ur prologue, he talks to us all, foresees us. We people his dream; he becomes our dream—to become primal, sincere, innocent, wandering,

> amiable and—important for me—be first to confront grizzly bear, musk ox, bison, and penetrate wilderness until it permeates him. ("Cosmos" 272)

The seeming illogic of these words diminishes when they are read for their archetypal content. In Jungian theory, myth manifests itself in the collective unconscious, and by means of Homage Whyte argues that "our dream" in Canada is the mythic Henry Kelsey. Although Whyte presents this dream as a natural desire, it arises from a specific generical and historical context.

VI

This discussion began by promising to consider the generical connection between Whyte's anatomical epic and Kelsey's topographical journey poem. This emphasis on literary kind is apposite, for as Mary Gerhart argues, the concept of genre is particularly useful when it is used diagnostically and heuristically to formulate hypotheses, not merely to classify, but to enable readers to recognize a text "for all that it is" (372). It is the goal of these closing paragraphs to propose a generical understanding of Homage that issues from one of Whyte's comments about Kelsey's historical importance: "since I still believe with some devotedness that he ought not be overlooked, my poem is an "'homage'" (Letter A). That Whyte forges a causal link between "devotedness" and the genre of Homage explains why it is unlike many other contemporary Canadian poems of book length.

Notably, Homage differs considerably from Margaret Atwood's The Journals of Susanna Moodie and from Michael Ondaatje's The Collected Works of Billy the Kid, both published in 1970. This date is important because Stephen Scobie, working with Dorothy Livesay's terminology, claims that these two "definitive" poems "established" the documentary genre in Canadian poetry (120). Consequently, when Scobie includes Homage in a list of texts that follow the documentary "precedent" set by Atwood and Ondaatje (120-21), he implies that Homage is a derivative poem. However, even though there can be little doubt that he read both of the "precedent" poems, Whyte began Homage in 1968, before the two exemplars were published, before Livesay delivered her paper on the "documentary poem" in 1969 at the meetings of the Learned Societies. In one of his letters, Whyte writes that the "earlier dates should be brought out" to show that Homage was "more or less synchronous" with Atwood's Susanna Moodie (Letter B). These comments display an understandable proprietary urge that anticipates and attempts to forestall the kind of connection that Scobie advocates between Homage and the documentary poem.

Begun in 1968, Homage belongs very much to the escalation of national pride that marked Canada's centennial, which explains, at least in part, why it advances Kelsey's journey as an achievement central to the traditions and beliefs of western Canadian culture, one that defines the regional, if not national, present. That is, the poem aspires to epic status, but, as the historical context of its composition suggests, it is not epic in the broadest sense of the term. Rather, Homage recalls the English epic of the Renaissance, a genre that Lewis F. Ball characterizes as a combination of patriotic ambition, landscape description, and historical interest that works to provide ethical instruction and a "genealogy of the present race" (87). These characteristics accord with Whyte's description of Homage as a poem that "incorporates history, myth, landscape, [and] a literary past" (Fells 8). As well, Whyte presents this incorporation in genealogical terms, for his Kelsey is a hero who is "our prologue," who "talks to us all," who embodies our dream "to become primal, sincere, innocent, wandering, amiable," and who finally stands as the "archetypal western Canadian" ("Cosmos" 272).

Balanced against these correspondences between Homage and the Elizabethan epic are several observations by Smaro Kamboureli on Whyte's poem. She argues that Homage is "not epic except insofar as its tone is frequently lofty," and that "epic in this poem does not designate genre but proportion: the expansiveness of the prairie, Kelsey's awe of the New World, physical endurance" (61). These comments issue from a more traditional understanding of the epic and from Kamboureli's contention that Homage is a "deconstructed epic" (62). Her point takes Whyte's definition of his anatomical epic—a "panoptic treatment of a single subject, or a singular point of view brought to bear on a multiplicity of subjects" (Fells 8-9)—as another way of describing dialogical discourse, and she concludes that Whyte's poem belongs to "a genre in which monologism is continuously subverted" (62). However, the paradox that Whyte creates between "panoptic" and a "singular point of view" is more perspectival and less discursive.[88] Indeed, the elements of Whyte's definition all belong to the visual register, and the book itself relies heavily on pictorial patterning in its layout. The 1981 edition also interweaves into the poem eight ink drawings by Dennis Burton (executed in chin-chin and Pelikan India ink and Dr. P.H. Martin's water colours) (80); these prairie landscapes less comprise a parallel text than intensify the already highly visual quality of *Homage*. As illustrations, they help fulfil Whyte's commitment to a "panoptic" perspective, and, as much as they represent landscape, they underscore the fact that his poem envisions national identity as the outgrowth of Kelsey's interaction with the prairie environment.

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[88] On the matter of paradox and the anatomy see Colie Paradoxia, 430-60, and Resources, 76-102. Perloff (3) and Ralph Cohen (11) both comment on the tendency in postmodernism, particularly when allied with poststructuralism, to consider genres as archaic categories which dissolve under parody or deconstruction. Cohen, in particular, argues that "critics who find postmodern writing non-generic because it is combinatory or reader oriented or discontinuous seem too unfamiliar with the available generic theories upon which they can draw" (15). In his Anatomy of Criticism where he discusses the anatomy,

That *Homage* proceeds by description no doubt derives from Kelsey's avowed goal in travelling inland—"But still I was resolved this same Country for to see" (*KP* 14). Working from this commitment to see the land, Whyte structures *Homage* according to a poetics of vision. He illustrates these in a passage that comments on and circumscribes the act of writing and reading *Homage*. In this portion of the

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Northrop Frye is concerned chiefly with prose; however, without suggesting that hybridization undoes the genre of genre, he notes that the anatomy merges with many other forms (312). Whyte's "anatomical epic," then, does not subvert monologism, particularly when the epic itself is an inclusionary genre; likewise, the topographical poem is equally capable of subsuming the epic, as Ball so convincingly argues.

poem, Whyte employs a geometrical trope that makes vision into a process that encompasses thought, perception, interpretation, and interaction:

> Sphere: a way of thinking
> Sphere: a manner of perception
>
> location
>
> Circle: a plane of intersection of two spheres
> a way of thinking, a mode of perception
> Circle: the intersection of a sphere and plane
> the volumetric intersection of a pair of
> spheres: a lens
> Sphere of the eye   Sphere of the world
> together a lens each focussing
> the other
>
> . . . .
>
> Substitute in the above any of the following:
>
> your sphere, my sphere;
> your sphere, Kelsey's sphere;
> my sphere; Kelsey's sphere (67)

This final set of appositions, which interlock thought and perception as vision into a "circle," extrapolate and juxtapose space and time. As the passage continues—"the spheres near each other / a pair of convex surfaces / diminishing the virtual we see a point of contact / the gap breached" (68)—Whyte, in effect, makes Homage the aperture through which he and his reader view Kelsey and the land through which he travelled. Neither Kelsey nor the landscape of Canada, however, are presented as objects to be seen; rather, Kelsey and his poem invest Homage as a structure of consciousness with which the reader interacts on the basis of a shared environment.

The shared environment is present because Whyte fills Homage with copious, sincerely descriptive passages of verse:

> Goldenrod, silverwood, water calla, dragonhead,
> bunchberry, ragwort, paintbrush, and sedge,
> Indian pipe, meadow rue, bur-weed, silverthread,
> hornwort; growing at the water's edge. (59)

These catalogues of still life anatomize the prairies, and, by shifting attention from Kelsey to the ground beneath his feet, they also broach the other portion of Whyte's paradoxical definition by offering "a singular point of view . . . on a multiplicity of subjects." This point of view is still guided by "devotedness," but, by extending his poetic devotion to the non-human and the seemingly trivial, Whyte augments the epic tradition with that of loco-descriptive or topographical poetry. His precedent for this modulation is not the documentary genre in itself, but, rather, the kind of documentation present in Kelsey's descriptions of his journey.

Kelsey's inventories deal with what Bentley calls the "commercially important aspects of his journey and the 'deerings point' area: the length and difficulty of the trade route, the availability of various and useful woods, and the presence of possible trading partners" ("Set Forth" 22). In his delineation of the land between York Fort and the grasslands Kelsey takes up the role of the topographer, a role which a near contemporary of Kelsey, Thomas Fuller (1608-61), defines as "*mincing* the world into particular pieces" (69; my emphasis). Fuller's participle of incision reflects the literal sense of anatomy (to cut), and it also indicates the ideological work figured in Kelsey's journey of claiming and naming.

Whyte's "anatomical epic" reiterates this very work, but, by means of the seemingly innocent, even transcendent, eye that breaches the gap between the imperial past and the patriotic present, it effaces the historical conditions of Kelsey's journey and renders Canada as Eden. This strangely neutral place is neither a theatre for Anglo-Franco wars, nor a resource to be plundered, nor a Native homeland invaded. Rather, the land that is north and west in Canada becomes a landscape that serves as backdrop for the appropriately solitary and heroic quest that Whyte's Kelsey undertakes.

Conceived of as a poem that uses landscape to achieve its ends, the generical work of Homage arises both from its literary kind and from the medium it mobilizes. As Mitchell notes, landscape is a "cultural medium" that "naturalizes a cultural and social construction, representing an artificial world as if it were simply given and inevitable, and it also makes that representation operational by interpellating its beholder in some more or less determinate relation to its givenness as sight and site" ("Introduction" 2). Put in terms of Homage: landscape appeals to the poem's reader by means of sight and the assumption that Canada is a shared site which guarantees a commonality in its subjects. Mitchell is worth citing again on this point when he says that landscape "always greets us as space, as environment, as that within which 'we' (figured as 'the figures' in the landscape) find—or lose—ourselves" ("Introduction" 2). Whyte locates this national act in a paradox that he calls culturally specific—"we" Canadians find ourselves by disappearing into the landscape.

Of course, Whyte's own generical label works to subvert his mystical version of Canadian desire, for any epic that is "anatomical" invites analysis from an historical perspective. If Whyte's reader replaces myth with history and landscape with land, the poem's final line—"The story continues" (73)—becomes an invitation to follow Kelsey not to his fibrous apotheosis, but to his death at East Greenwich, England, in 1724. After a lifetime of service to the HBC, Kelsey had earned some £2,500, little enough to cause his widow, Elizabeth Kelsey, to petition the company in 1730 for help with the cost of apprenticing her son, John Kelsey, who was then seventeen (K.G. Davies, "Kelsey" 314). This uncanny continuation of the Kelsey story is perhaps the least heroic, but, ironically, it is perhaps the most "Canadian" in that it displays the economics of indentured service to international capital. Certainly, these bleaker elements lie outside the poem; put another way, they comprise the "landscape delitescent" of the poem. Nevertheless, like Kelsey and his poem, in Whyte's words, they "ought not be overlooked" (Letter A).

If the historical framework of Whyte's response to Kelsey's poem is overlooked then it is possible to acknowledge that Homage is the work of a poet, not an historian. Yet, it still must be asked to what end a creative writer works when dealing with history and place. This question is one that will remain open for the moment in order to permit an examination of another pair of poems that also place on view a framework of questions about the roles that poets play in representing the places of Canada.

CHAPTER THREE: PART ONE

> You will judge how naturally rich the soil must be, to produce good crops without manure, and without ever lying fallow, and almost without ploughing; yet our political writers in England never speak of Canada without the epithet of *barren*. (Brooke 65)

Unlike those considered in the previous chapter, the two poems under examination at present appear to have very little in common. The earlier, Abram's Plains: A Poem, by Thomas Cary (1751-1823) was printed at Quebec in 1789 by William Brown; the later, "Seed Catalogue," by Robert Kroetsch (1927-) was published by Turnstone Press at Winnipeg in 1977. Even to mention their titles, however, begins to draw these poems closer, at least on the matter of their prestige, for they are two of the most widely known, remarked, and anthologized poems in Canadian literature. Yet, in spite of their canonical importance, no critical endeavour to date has attempted to draw them together in order to examine their generical affiliations and the work they perform by representing two historically and regionally distinct visions of Canada. The closest thing to such a study is the "ecological" approach (18) that Bentley takes in his most comprehensive study of Canadian poetry, The Gay]Grey Moose (1992). In that volume, Bentley argues that Kroetsch and Cary (and several other writers) might be simultaneously examined:

> there is value surely in attempting to relate, say, Robert Kroetsch and George Bowering to adherents of the hinterland orientation in other regions and earlier times such as the Adam Kidd of The Huron Chief (1830), and in endeavouring to distinguish among these writers and such baseland-oriented poets as Klein and the Thomas Cary of Abram's Plains (1789). (Gay]Grey 19)

However, by identifying in Kroetsch a "hinterland orientation" and in Cary a "baseland" orientation, Bentley plainly means to differentiate—not associate—the writers he mentions, for these critical categories, on one hand, serve to characterize Kroetsch as a writer with a preference for textual freedom and openness, as one who resists authority and enclosure, and, on the other hand, to style Cary as a lover of order and enclosure, as one who writes out of a spirit of command and authority (81-82).[89]

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[89] In the same study, Bentley illustrates and develops his "baseland/hinterland" dichotomy from W.L. Morton's The Canadian Identity. As Bentley notes, this work was reprinted as "The Relevance of Canadian History" in Contexts of Canadian Criticism, edited by Eli Mandel (290 n11). Although he uses the word "dichotomy" to describe these two orientations, Bentley emphasizes that they are

In terms more politically charged, it could be said that Cary's poetic practices are Georgian and colonial while Kroetsch's are postmodern as well as postcolonial, and that these labels demarcate and constitute an impassable gulf separating the ideology, aims, style, and effects of the works produced. To be sure, both poems are unquestionably moulded by their respective historical contexts, but if an ungenerous reader condemns Cary's colonial mannerisms then Kroetsch deserves equal disapprobation for his mannerly flirtation with the tenets of contemporary literary theory, which are as derivative and imperial in their origins as those which Cary employs. This study, however, does not aim at an unsympathetic reading of either poem; rather, it seeks to build a bridge between the two by placing on view the ways in which they handle language to represent history and landscape. These

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not rigid categories. He elaborates this point by correlating the baseland tendency to Walter Pater's use of the term centripetal, and, in turn, by associating the hinterland tendency to the latter's definition of centrifugal (83-85). Bentley takes care to acknowledge not simply an indebtedness to Morton but also an affiliation. That is, informed by tory values, Bentley's ecological model aims to emplace an ethic and scholarship that honours conservation as part of being conservative. This commitment issues in Bentley's concomitant critique of "Deconstruction, Feminism, Marxism, Post-Structuralism, and again, Post-Modernism that have implicitly or explicitly declared themselves hostile to nature, history, locality, individuality" (6).

subjects indicate that the present discussion proceeds not by Bentley's ecological method, but, rather, by means of a generical approach that treats both texts not only as long poems but also as topographical poems.

To designate these poems as topographical, however, does not undermine the importance of their length and the coincidence of their nearly equal proportions. Cary's poem is just less than six hundred lines long while Kroetsch's poem has just over five hundred lines. In terms of length, both Abram's Plains and "Seed Catalogue" occupy the medial position that W. MacNeile Dixon and H.J.C. Grierson assign to the long poem, a genre which they stipulate is "neither epical in scope nor yet wholly lyrical in quality" (vii). In between the imperialistic ethos of the epic and the individualistic voice of the lyric, the longer Canadian poem is more usefully characterized by Bentley as "the record or chronicle of a cultural unit that exists in or beside a civilization and provides its constituents with a comforting sense of their identity and difference" ("Colonial" 3). As longer topographical poems, Abram's Plains and "Seed Catalogue" depict more than the temporal "record or chronicle" of their respective constituencies; they also portray the necessary spatial or geographical foundations from which these constituencies form their respective senses of "identity and difference." In both poems, these perceptions of identity and difference are intimately linked to the environs described in the text.

Both poems depict their respective locales from strikingly different perspectives. Cary looks out over the Province of Quebec from a bird's eye view, and Kroetsch regards the "home place" (13) from a low prospect that originates from having fallen "off a horse" (11).[90] However, Cary also uses the picturesque mode of landscape representation in his poem; unlike the convention of the bird's eye view, the picturesque uses a lower prospect, so the background rises to contain the eye. More will be said about the tension between these two perspectives within Cary's poem in the pages that follow. For the moment, however, the connotative abundance in the word "prospect" serves as a means to organize the upcoming discussion.

As Susan Glickman notes in her article on Abram's Plains, the word "prospect" is often used to "describe the landscape surveyed in topographical poetry" (509). Noting some of the many definitions given for "prospect" in the OED, she indicates that a prospect "may consist in 'a mental looking forward; consideration or knowledge of, or regard to something future'" (510). Her reading of Abram's Plains thus emphasizes Cary's optimistic forecast for Quebec's future. Bentley also notes Cary's forward-looking hopefulness, but he invokes Janus because for him the poem looks back in time to the British victory at the Plains of Abraham in order to project into the future ("Introduction" xiii). This twofold vision also has generical implications because Cary's optimism for the future rests on the mercantile promise he sees in the St. Lawrence River. Cary looks backward through an intertextual argosy of poems that have a riparian thrust—Pope's Windsor Forest, Thomson's The Seasons, Denham's Cooper's Hill, Drayton's Poly-Olbion, Spenser's Faerie Queene (its river pageant), Ausonius' Mosella, and Ovid's Metamorphoses—to lend the weight of tradition to his vision of the commercial role that St. Lawrence River will play in the formation of Canada. This interplay between an economic future and a literary past suggests that Abram's Plains might be better imagined in dialectical terms, for Cary's outlook in the poem is fixed on the present moment as much as on either the past or the future. As indicated by this reference to United Empire Loyalists resettling in Canada—"Pleas'd with the *now*, the *past* no more had pain'd" (71)—Cary pays much attention to the "*now.*"[91]

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[90] All quotations of "Seed Catalogue" rely on the 1977 edition; only page numbers, not line numbers, are used to locate citations.

Its reader can effectively organize the three time frames of Cary's poem returning to the term "prospect," for each time frame has its corresponding spatial reference as well.[92] Cary looks first to the Plains of Abraham to ground himself in place and in the peaceful present; from that prospect he begins the task of adapting his neo-classical poetic conventions to suit his Canadian location. He also avails himself of two environmental theories of the eighteenth century—the concept of northern hardihood and the theory of climatic amelioration—to project a distinctively Canadian expectation: a collectivity of hardy people reaping the economic and cultural benefits that result from their efforts to clear and to cultivate the land of Canada. Second, the way in which Cary uses an elevated viewpoint to overlook the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence watershed will be treated in terms of the area's future prospects. In this portion of the discussion it will be argued that Cary descries a nascent vision of the geo-political entity that became the Dominion of Canada.[93] Third, Cary's use of the picturesque method of landscape representation will be examined for the ways in which it naturalizes and counterbalances the cartographic and haptic urge that informs his bird's eye view over the Province of Quebec. These three perspectives combine to make Abram's Plains a text the appeal of which is almost entirely visual, but it is best likened to a map or chart incorporating a number of illuminated insets, rather than a landscape painting, because it represents a vast territorial area instead of a single composed scene.

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[91] All quotations of Abram's Plains are taken from the 1986 Canadian Poetry Press reprint of the poem, edited by Bentley. In his Introduction, Bentley outlines the minor emendations made to the first edition of 1789 (xliii). Throughout the present discussion, all line numbers from the poem appear in italics, and the title is signified by AP.

[92] Foster argues that the topographical poet uses certain time projections to demonstrate the historical necessity of his vision. According to Foster, the topographical poet may be "looking and writing" in the present, reflecting on the historical past, using a mythological past for purposes of comparison and explanation of origins, as well as projecting into the future (399).

Like Cary, Kroetsch writes topographically. He uses the "home place" to explore his own dialectic. Unseated from the horse, which represents the masculine world, and outside of the house, which represents the feminine order, Kroetsch takes up the heuristic process of attempting to answer what is now a famous set of questions: "*How do you grow a prairie town? . . . How do you grow a past / to live in?*" (23); "*How do you grow a poet?*" (30); "*How do you grow a garden?*" (47). Near the poem's end, in section seven, he intimates an answer to the third question. In the Seed Catalogue entry for brome grass (*bromus inermis*), Kroetsch posits a metaphor for the prairie poet (35). This grass, however, like most things "Canadian," is not native to Canada. The northern strain was developed in Germany and introduced to Canada about 1888 (Elliot and Clarke n.p.). By implicitly using a model of importation and adaptation to address the problem of writing poetry in Canada, Kroetsch uncannily recapitulates the process that Cary uses (albeit less self-consciously) to create his emergent Canadian poetics. This brief introduction indicates that more needs to be said on each of these subjects and poems. To undertake that process, the discussion that follows will conform to the pattern established in the previous chapter by first examining Cary's poem at length and then turning to consider Kroetsch's poem.

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[93] Cary wrote and published before Canada was divided, that is, before 1791, so his vision can legitimately extend beyond what the 1791 Act of Constitution defined as Lower Canada.

I

Cary confines his treatment of the Plains of Abraham, despite their eponymic importance to his poem, to several minor tableaux, the most detailed of which deals with the death of General James Wolfe (*302-31*). Rather than focusing on the historic battle of 13 September 1759 and the battleground itself, Cary keeps his reader moving through what appears, at a first reading, to be an unorganized set of descriptive passages dealing with the scenery and inhabitants of Quebec, for, in addition to his descriptions of the battlefield and the St. Lawrence corridor, he directs his reader's attention also to the French-English conflict over the Ohio River Basin, to Sir William Johnson's defeat of Baron Dieskaue at Lac Sacrement, and to the unsuccessful attempt on Quebec that General Benedict Arnold made at the time of the American Revolution. As if sedulously to ensure that his poem also contains the requisite amount of "incidental meditation" that Samuel Johnson named as a trait of topographical poetry, Cary reflects on the destruction of war, on the gustatory oddities of people, on the necessity of combat, and on fortune's inscrutability, and he touches on a number of local matters dealing with politics, progress, wealth, and city life. These subjects are all framed within a structure that resembles the scheme of the "'ideal day'" of John Milton's pair of poems, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," because the poem begins in what appears to be full sunlight and ends at nightfall (Aubin 12).[94] Given its relative brevity, the poem's broad scope is made possible through Cary's willingness to be "Led by the muse" (*480*) and to "let her please her view" (*455*).

In all these diverse elements, Abram's Plains exemplifies not only the topographical poem in general but also the "shovelling in" of "attractions" which especially characterized the genre in the latter part of the eighteenth century (Aubin 52). As a result of Cary's spadework, the poem manifests "the chaos of influences" that infected poems of its type after 1770 (Aubin 86). The simultaneous presence in Abram's Plains of three sub-types of the topographical poem, the river poem, the regional poem, and the prospect or hill poem, testifies to the accuracy of Aubin's observation.[95] Cary's poem is rendered even busier by its many poetic and aesthetic modes; it is by turns georgic, pastoral, picturesque, sublime, retrospective, descriptive, digressive, and meditative, to name only the dominant voices in the poem. Nevertheless, Cary's use of the decasyllabic couplet safeguards Abram's Plains from becoming chaotic. This structure, as I.S. MacLaren says, possesses a "legendary order" in its "imitation of balance, good sense and propriety" ("Pastoral" 17). These qualities exist both in the poem's formal structure and in its celebration of what Bentley calls the "*pax Britannica*" (Mimic 26). It is important to remember that Cary is writing three decades after the decisive British victory on the Plains of Abraham. As argued earlier, Cary's use of Abram in his opening apostrophe, rather than Abraham, suggests that the English victory over the French somehow resonates with ancient Israel's history when Yahweh entered into covenant with Abram. Cary thus adumbrates a typology that suggests the place called the Plains of Abraham and his poem Abram's Plains stand as a new beginning for the English in Quebec. The typology is, perhaps, no fulfillment of prophecy, but it constitutes a definitive step, in sacred, mythic, and

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[94] Aubin says that John Dyer's "Grongar Hill" (1726) "injected" into topographical poetry Milton's "'ideal day scheme,'" and "the picturesque vision" (84). These elements are consciously absorbed and displayed by Cary. As Aubin notes, James Ward, in "Phoenix Park" (1724), had already employed the "ideal day" plan (278, n283). Dyer's Grongar Hill," however, was the far more influential poem.

[95] See Barrell for a helpful clarification on the hill poem. These poems were never about hills, "but about what can be seen from the top of them" (21). Cary is not so much on a hill as he is on the escarpment that overlooks the St. Lawrence nearest the Plains of Abraham. No hill close to the Plains of Abraham actually affords sufficient elevation necessary to the bird's eye lookout that informs Cary's poem. The absence of such a lookout reinforces the fact

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that Cary has a map in his mind's eye (or on his desk) as he writes.

political history. The undercurrent of sacred history is further reinforced by the bird's eye view that comes to dominate the poem, for Aubin's evolutionary history of the prospect poem lists "Aeneas' survey of Carthage from a hilltop," and "Moses on Pisgah" as well as "Edgar on Dover Cliff" (78). Cary makes no overt reference to any of these examples, but his emphasis on the peace and leisure wrought by the British victory is punctuated with biblical and classical imagery.

II

Even in its most visible use of classical allusions and British poetic conventions, Abram's Plains is preeminently about Canada and the task of inventing and imaging that place, particularly its northernness. The poem begins, however, on an idyllic note:

> Thy Plains, O *Abram*! and thy pleasing views,
> Where, hid in shades, I sit and court the muse,
> Grateful I sing. For there, from care and noise,
> Oft have I fled to taste thy silent joys:
> There, lost in thought, my musing passion fed,
> Or held blest converse with the learned dead.
>
> (*1-6*)

The "muse," significantly, is present at a Canadian site. This fact prompts Bentley to argue that the beginning of the poem is most remarkable for its attempt to "fuse its old-world, neo-classical conventions with its new-world, Canadian subject-matter" ("Introduction" xvi). Surely, the most striking of these arises in the couplet where Cary conjoins the "balmy breeze of Zephyrus" and the "bleak northern gale" of Canada:

> Else, like a steed, unbroke to bit or rein,
> Courting fair health, I drive across the plain;
> The balmy breeze of Zephyrus inhale,
> Or bare my breast to the bleak northern gale.
> (7-*10*)

By suggesting a combination of the west wind of Greek mythology with a Canadian "northern gale" Cary ensures that the associations of "fair health" deriving from the classical world accrue also to the new world. The images and the prosody of this passage, moreover, join to make manifest Cary's distinct regional pride in ways that go far beyond what may seem an obligatory, even slavishly colonial, allusion to Zephyrus. The speaker's sudden shift from his earlier seated repose is forcefully achieved through a series of verbs—"drive . . . inhale . . . bare"—two of which fall after the "metrical fulcrum" of the medial caesura which announces an important or revelatory moment (Fussell 28); the verbs build force incrementally to suggest a vigorous, spirited, and undeniably robust speaker whose health is more than "fair." This sudden transition is not a permanent alteration, but, for the moment, Cary's speaker breaks from his leisurely state of apostrophizing "just like an English swain" (MacLaren, "The Pastoral" 16). Bentley suggests that Cary, by way of likening himself to an unbroken "steed," manifests the "vital and healthy exercise of (British) liberty or freedom" ("Introduction" xvi).[96] This inference is irrefutable, for Cary makes many references to "the ardour of the British breast" (*102*) for freedom (*90, 99, 102, 137, 287, 289, 434*). Yet, Cary displays also an unremarked Canadian behaviour in this passage.[97] That is, he shows a very early example of the climatological myth that Canada's northern airs invigorate to the point of distinguishing its inhabitants from those of other environs and nations. The general myth of a vital northernness is, of course, an old one; in English, it appears as early as 1625, when in Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall, Francis Bacon wrote that the cold of the north "is that which, without aid of discipline, doth make the bodies hardest, and the courages warmest" (278).[98]

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[96] Bentley suggests that Cary may have had in mind Pope's An Essay on Man—"When the proud steed shall know why Man . . . / . . . drives him o'er the plains" (1:61-62) or Thomson's "Autumn,"(60-61)—"the bleak North, / With Winter charg'd" (Mimic 29).

[97] Because it is an argument from silence this note remains at the margins of my discussion. Yet, it should be observed that by foregoing one of the typical allusions connected with Zephyrus, Cary hints that his British patriotism is surpassed by his devotion to Canada. That is, he does not invoke The Odyssey of Homer, in particular Book Ten, in which Aeolus aids Odysseus by leaving the west wind unrestrained and thus available to blow his ships eastward and home. In other words, Cary has at his fingertips, in the "balmy breeze of Zephyrus," a ready occasion to pine for home and so to articulate his supposed colonial displacement. However, he exhibits no form of estrangement in this passage; Klinck's comment on this topic is worth

The idea of northern hardiness surfaced most conspicuously in Cary's historical context through Edward Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776). As Suzanne Zeller notes, "nearly every educated person in the English-speaking world read Gibbon's History" (172), so Gibbon is suggestively relevant to Cary's poem when it is remembered that Gibbon argued not only that Canada "is an exact picture of ancient Germany" but also that the "keen air of Germany formed the large and masculine limbs of the natives, who were, in general, of a more lofty stature than the people of the South" (I, 188). It has not proven possible to ascertain if Gibbon's History

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recalling: the "theme of exile or homesickness for the Old Land was not as common in Canadian colonial writing as one has been taught to believe" (136).

[98] J.W. Johnson presents a very accessible discussion of climatic myths, from antiquity to this century.

exerted a direct influence on Cary; nevertheless, the image of his speaker moving with unbridled equine energy across the Plains of Abraham gives the next couplet a similar emphasis on robust health, particularly in the speaker's act of confronting the "bleak northern gale." When the "steed, unbroke to bit or rein" is conflated with the speaker's uncovered "breast," the image created, that of a centaur, initially seems curiously inappropriate in this very decorous and orderly poem, but, if the image is meant to evoke the wisdom and kindness of Chiron, as well as the associations of healing and music that he embodies, then Cary does well in appropriating a symbol that thematizes his own love of "polite learning," irenic behaviour, and the "sound of a pitch-pipe" that he outlines in the preface to his poem (1-2). Moreover, rather than expressing an "aesthetic and an ideology extraneous to Canadian experience," as Kamboureli would have the colonial long poem do, Abram's Plains thus shows the signs of a literature actively transposing and adapting classical models, as neo-classical English literature did, to suit the conditions of writing in a new land (10). In its adaptation of classical figures, this portion of Cary's poem is a significant one because the speaker displays no aesthetic alienation from the landscape; he apprehends the "plain" not as a strange object or a spectacle but as an occasion that invites him to engage in a lived event. His experience is of the sort that combines imaginative practice with real geography to produce what Lefebvre calls the "affective kernel" of lived or emplaced experience (42). For Lefebvre, this "kernel" is the fruit of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived (39). It is this last category that endows the opening of Cary's poem with an authenticity.

In his ability to make his poetry's sound match its sense, Cary further advances his version of the northern myth. For example, the strongly alliterative phrases—"balmy breeze," . . . "bare my breast to the bleak"—divide the flow of breath just enough to give the couplet the percussive and deliberative force appropriate to the images deployed in it. Moreover, the two relatively heavy syllables—"tō thē | bléak nórth | ērn gāle"—comprising the fourth foot of line ten function as a spondee; this metrical variation is not only suitably sonorous and spirited but also logically forceful in its depiction of the north wind. It is true that spondaic substitution has its comic effects, but, as Fussell says, the use of the spondee to emphasize the "force of action is a treasured traditional effect in English poetry" (55). That Cary employs the spondee for its more potent attributes seems certain because he juxtaposes it, underscoring its force even further, with the pyrrhic stresses present in the line's third foot.

These two metrical variations, and many others, show that Cary is an able practitioner of Augustan poetic conventions.[99] This observation indicates, however, that much of Cary's poetic ability manifests itself in emulating the work of other poets.

Susan Glickman accurately identifies Cary's faculty for imitation when she calls the opening lines of Abram's Plains a "montage of allusions to Thomson's The Seasons and Pope's Windsor-Forest" (507). Glickman, however, avoids an evaluation in this observation, and she sidesteps the temptation to judge Cary's poetry by Romantic and Modernist standards of originality. Instead, in Cary's "montage" she finds his "joy in his literary inheritance" (507). I concur that Cary is no mere *bricoleur*, and, in his imitative style, he shows an ability to exploit British conventions to suit his Canadian setting. Here, it is worth recalling Alexander Pope's metrical wit on the subject of physical beauty: "'Tis not a lip or eye we beauty call, / But the joint force, and full result of all" (Essay on Criticism 245-46). Pope's arrangement of two weaker syllables before two stronger stresses—"Būt thē jóint fórce"—offers the pattern that Cary follows in his tenth line. This derivation, however, in no way reduces the poetic impact that he creates by adapting and assigning a "spondaic embodiment" to the northern wind of Canada (Fussell 54). The north wind, moreover, bears directly on the poem's speaker with a rhetorical and poetical force that anticipates the argument mounted by the Canada First movement some seventy years later: Cary figures forth a hardy northern race, one poised to harness the great economic potential of the St. Lawrence region, where "smiling peace and laughing plenty reign" (AP *448*). By this act, Cary's poem presents itself as an important pre-Confederation rhizome underlying the five decades of nationalism which, as Carl Berger puts it in his essay "The True North Strong and Free," "flowered" after Confederation by virtue of an emphasis on Canada's northern character.

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[99] In "Thomas Cary" (18-21) Bentley provides his most detailed discussion of Cary's facility with the mimetic

Cary's version of the northern myth is repeated in several different forms throughout his poem. Of particular note is the way in which he reproduces, with a distinctively Canadian inflection, a portion of Thomson's

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devices of the decasyllabic couplet.

poem, The Seasons, that depicts the onset of winter. Where Thomson writes "For sight too fine, the ethereal nitre flies, / Killing infectious damps, and the spent air / storing afresh with elemental life" (694-96), Cary introduces winter as the result of assembled forces:

> When, from far seas, *Eurus* with fleecy wings,
> Fleak following fleak, his virgin nitre flings;
> Or blust'ring *Boreas*, blowing from the pole,
> Commands the floods no more their streams to roll:
>
> Or more when *Zephyrus*, severely keen,
> When not a cloud to skirt the sky is seen,
> From *Apalachian* hills dry blows the breeze,
> Fly, fly far south ye children of disease—
> (*504-11*)

The net effect of these lines is superficially similar to what Thomson achieves; Cary, however, reaches an unconventional outcome by once again uniting Zephyrus with the north wind, albeit in its classical incarnation, to create an additional kind of "joint force," one signalled by another spondaic repetition—"Flý, flý"—which underscores the wholesome quality of his Canadian location by banishing the "children of disease" to the South. In light of the fact that the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century inhabitants of Quebec were afflicted often by cholera, typhus, small-pox, scarlet and yellow fever, as well as measles, Cary's emphatic dismissal of disease and his concurrent accent on the wholesome quality of northern airs displays an awareness of the real conditions around him as well as his sincere concern for the health and prosperity of his home (Ruddel 29).

Such self-interest places on view an important distinction between what may be called an ideology of northernness and an aesthetic of winter. Thomson evinces the latter, for when he turns to describe the northern latitudes of Russia he speaks of "icy horrors" and of "cheerless towns far distant—never blessed" ("Winter" 805-06); Cary's later praise of a representative Canadian, a "trav'ller dauntless" (*560*) who "Tales of Europeans lost in snow derides" (*563*), appears as a direct contrast not only to Thomson's morbid picture of Russia but also to that passage in "Winter" (276-321) in which "the swain / Disastered stands" (278-79) before falling into the "snows a stiffened corse" (321). In his allusion to and appropriation of Thomson's poem, in his disavowal of the European "swain," and in his emphasis on winter's wholesomeness, Cary even while employing pastoral motifs reconfigures them to suit Canada, and, in the case of the traveller, asserts a distinct figure altogether. In these matters Cary very clearly asserts that Canada is different from Britain and Europe both imaginatively and climatologically.

Although this process of differentiation holds the promise of constituting a Canadian confederation, it goes forward by means of social hierarchy. In Cary's poem, this takes the form of a palpable arrogance that subjects the French, Canadiens, Indians, and Americans to the British. Cary's loyalties to Britain, however, are in turn displaced by his local interests, which are clearly articulated by a passage in which the "trav'ller dauntless" appears. In this passage, Cary's mere mention of the canoe and the snowshoe clarifies his awareness of how European and Aboriginal cultures blended in eighteenth-century Quebec:

> Fearless, amidst the fragments, as they flow,
> The skilful peasant guides his long canoe.
> The trav'ller dauntless the snows depths disdains,
> He stalks secure o'er hills, o'er vales and plains;
> On the spread racket, whilst he safely strides,
> Tales of Europeans lost in snow derides.
> Here, (blush ye London fops embox'd in chair,

> Who fear, tho' mild your clime, to face the air)
> Scorning to shrink at every breeze that blows,
> Unaw'd, the fair brave frosts and driving snows.
> (558-67)

Bentley describes this passage as Cary's "tribute to the fortitude and adaptability of the inhabitants of his adopted colony" ("Introduction" xxxviii). As a tribute, these lines do not contain Cary's best poetic efforts, but their expressive contrast between the casketed or "embox'd" foppery of London and the vital dexterity of Quebec's paddlers and travellers tellingly associates northernness with the virtues of courage and versatility.

"The fair," an ambiguous noun in this passage's final line, may stand as a collective appositive for the peasant and the traveller, or it may signify Cary's conviction that northern travellers are fortunate, even blessed. Moreover, given Cary's parenthetical address, he may be drawing on the term's archaic connotations to imply that the women of Canada are more robust than London's effeminate dandies. The last possibly accords with the very masculine images that saturate the rest of the poem, and it gives further credence to the thesis that Abram's Plains displays an ideology of the North that prefigures, indeed, makes possible, the post-Confederation discourse enlivening the reception of Robert Grant Haliburton's nationalist creed as advanced in his essay, The Men of the North and Their Place in History (1869): "may not our snow and frost give us what is of more value than gold or silver, a healthy, hardy, virtuous, dominant race?" (10). Although Cary's verse lacks the dogmatic rhetoric of Haliburton's prose, the poet no less forcefully underscores that the "frosts and driving snows" of Canada yield a people whose characteristics distinguish them from Londoners and Europeans. Yet, if Cary's travellers synecdochically stand for an emergent northern race, then it must be asked how this population was to hope for conditions that were conducive not only for producing hardy people but also for cultivating soil so that their civilization might thrive.

In order to make the severe winter of Canada serve two roles, Cary had at his disposal "virgin nitre" (*505*). His use of the term "nitre" is likely indebted to the idea, popular in the eighteenth century, that "a windy season and serene sky" favoured the production of this substance (James 50). Moreover, in his use of Eurus and Boreas, the Greek gods of the east and north winds, respectively, Cary fortuitously matches neo-classical allusion with the eighteenth-century climatological theory which held that

> the east and north winds only bring with them the

> primogenial acid of the air which saturates the alkaline sulphureous parts of the earth and converts them into nitre. . . . [L]ong frosts and snows, especially after a hot summer mellow the ground and render it exceeding fertile, because the earth calcined and rendered alkaline by the summer heats is by the frost and snow abundantly supplied with an acid and rendered nitrous.
>
> (James 50-51)

It is difficult to prove with certainty that Cary read Robert James' Rational Farmer and Practical Husbandman (1743), but the connection that it draws between "long frosts and snows" and "exceeding fertile" soil may help to explain why Cary does not attempt to disguise or understate the severity of his new country's northern winters. Indeed, even at his most pointed, Cary offers no more protest than to observe that winter is "too long" (*142*) because its freezing temperatures create ice that "bars the liquid way" of "commerce" (*140, 143*) along the St. Lawrence. The lengthy winters, however, as James indicates, offset their harshness by producing ample amounts of natural fertilizer. This theory saw specific application to Quebec's climate in Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix's Journal of a Voyage to North America (1744; English translation 1761). In the assured tone of an empirical observer, Charlevoix says that when "the nitrous particles of the snow" are tilled into Quebec's soil, it produces greater harvests (II, 255).

Cary's entirely positive outlook on Canada's climate is a subject worthy of further attention because it stands in such marked contrast to the outlook of another long topographical poem on Canada, J. Mackay's Quebec Hill; or, Canadian Scenery. A poem in Two Parts, published in London in 1797.[100] The conspicuous contrast between these two poems may owe something to differences in the temperament of each author, but it is more likely that Cary wrote for a Canadian audience while Mackay directed his poem to readers in London. With a local audience in mind (along with local allegiances), Cary, unlike Mackay, uses different sources of information about Canada, and he employs an altogether different set of ideas about the climate of Canada.[101]

Bentley describes the tone of Quebec Hill as "counter-pastoral and counter-bucolic," and proposes that its sensational portraits of Canada's climatic extremes—intense heat and cold—arise from Mackay's desire to feed his British audience the "pleasurable horror" of the sublime (Mimic 43). Mackay, according to Bentley, likely drew the inspiration for his fantastic descriptions of Canadian weather from John Aikin's Essay in the Application of Natural History to Poetry (1777). Aikin's observation, "that no source could be so productive of novelty" as "the polar and tropical parts of the globe" to the inhabitants of a "temperate climate" (140), appears to motivate Mackay's plan of splitting his poem into two parts, one for summer and one for winter, each half an exercise in portraying climatological extremes. Mackay, as Bentley points out, was almost certainly influenced by some of the then current travel literature on Canada, texts like Pehr Kalm's Travels into North America (1770-71), Jonathan Carver's Travels through the Interior Parts of North America, in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768 (1778), or the very popular account of Samuel Hearne's travels in Canada, A Journey from Prince of Wales Fort, in Hudson's Bay, to the Northern Ocean (1795), which was likely not a source used in the writing of Quebec Hill, yet its popularity may have encouraged the poem's emphasis on the exotic aspects of Canada (Mimic 41-50). Mackay's poem, like Cary's, also owes much to Thomson, Pope, Goldsmith, and Milton (as well as, perhaps, to Cary himself), so Bentley's splendid reconstruction of the "typical compositional setting" for poets like Cary and Mackay, as well as for "most of their successors," advances a "primal scene" in which the poet sits "with some engaging travel accounts open to his left and some admired English poems open to his right" (51). Little can be added to this account, except it is necessary to imagine that Cary had books on his left such as Charlevoix's Journal (1761) or Gibbon's Decline and Fall (1776) or David Hume's The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar (1754-62), works that offer an entirely more positive outlook on northern latitudes.[102]

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[100] See Bentley's Mimic Fires for a discussion of Mackay's identity. Although Glickman makes him John Mackay (499), Bentley points out that his initial conceals at least three possible identities: James Mackay, a cadet; James Mackay, a lieutenant and veteran of the American Revolution; or Captain John Mackay a ship's captain (40).

[101] It should be noted that Glickman also compares Abram's Plains to Mackay's Quebec Hill. She concludes that "formal considerations of genre and intertextuality" cannot account for the "contrasting visions of these two poets" (513).

Such speculation is warranted when one considers Cary's overall emphasis on progress, especially on timber clearing and agricultural cultivation because these two acts were part of a theory of "climatic amelioration" which held that such alterations to a relatively uncultivated Canada would improve its climate (Zeller 171). In Abram's

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[102] Zeller argues that, among others, Gibbon relied on Charlevoix and Hume (172). Although it is not certain that he read Hume, an auction announcement which listed Cary as "Auc, & Brok," appeared in the 5 Jan. 1805 issue of the Quebec Mercury. Among the "valuable collection of books for

Plains, clearing and cultivating appear as a nearly indivisible and simultaneous pair:

> The sturdy oak, the lofty mountain-pine,
> Their branching limbs and trunks mature resign;
> Whilst Ceres, bounteous, from her gran'ries pours,
> On craving realms, her grain in golden showers.
> (*214-17*)

Bountiful harvests replacing forests does not, admittedly, constitute an outright commitment to the theory of climactic improvement, but the phrase "craving realms" suggests the former standing crop of trees somehow deprived the soil of nourishment, or at least of sun, as this discourse on the fate of "thick-matted woods" (*116*) shows:

> Deep hid in mists, eternal glooms where reign,
> Nor once light enters but with utmost pain:
> Tho' hard the task, yet bare the soil shall lay,
> And, unobstructed, shine the lamp of day.
> (*128-31*)

As indicated, to "bare the soil" was to allow the rays of the sun to penetrate to the ground and so to warm the earth; the cultivation that followed was held to make the climate "more temperate" (Zeller 172). Although this idea

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sale" is "Hume's History of England" ("By Auction" 8).

may seem illogical to contemporary readers, the meteorology of the eighteenth century was only beginning to establish a scientific basis of understanding, and it was not until 1839 that this physical science established itself as an organized discipline in Canada (Zeller 116). Prior to that time, a wide variety of theories attempted to explain the cause and the remedy of Canada's harsh climates. Charlevoix, for example, argued that the "thickness of the woods" was the "principal cause" of Canada's extremely cold winters (258). It followed, then, that "as the country is cleared . . . the winters would become much shorter and less severe" (Charlevoix II, 258-60).[103]

Cary certainly shows some understanding of this theory in his assertion that it is not "want of climate or of soil" (*218*) that will ultimately prevent his "infant world" from competing with other national powers (*220*). If Cary was reading Gibbon's Decline and Fall (likely given Zeller's description of its popularity—"a literary institution even in his own day" [172]), then it seems impossible that he could have overlooked the parallel drawn between "ancient Germany" and eighteenth-century Canada (188). Writing first of Germany's old forests, Gibbon then turns to the St. Lawrence and Canada:

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[103] The probability that Cary had read Charlevoix's Journal is extremely high. One of the footnotes in Abram's Plains concerning the medicinal properties of "Rattle-snake plaintain" repeats Charlevoix's description of the plant very closely, nearly word for word in some places (AP 6). Bentley's notes to his edition of Abram's Plains identify Carver's Travels as a possible source for this material (AP 32); as the earlier text, Charlevoix's Journal may have informed Carver's work.

> These immense woods have been gradually cleared, which intercepted the rays of the sun. The morasses have been drained, and, in proportion as the soil has been cultivated, the air has become more temperate. Canada, at this day, is an exact picture of ancient Germany. Although situated in the same parallel with the finest provinces of France and England, that country experiences the most rigorous cold. The reindeer are very numerous, the ground is covered with deep and lasting snow, and the great river of St. Lawrence is regularly frozen, in a season when the waters of the Seine and the Thames are usually free from ice. (I, 188)

Gibbon's comparison between Canada and the "finest provinces of France and England" may well underlie the nearly unbounded confidence that Cary holds for Quebec's future as "commerce a footing gains" (AP *107*). In the context of the late 1780s, such hope was capable of overlooking the fact that the crops of Quebec failed in 1788, and, as a result, the so-called "hungry year" ensued in 1789 (Creighton 107).[104] In light of the severity of the crop failure, to regard Cary as a mere optimist is to underestimate the interpellating power of an ideology; climatic amelioration is but another way of saying *progress*, so to find an ideology of progress at work in Georgian Canada is to note the presence and emergence of the credo—"Forward"—that especially characterizes not only later Victorian thought and action in both Britain and Canada but also contemporary thought and action in nearly every western culture (Altick 107). This aspect of Cary's poem thus affords an occasion to advance further the idea that it is part of a literary and cultural continuum, one in which earlier works are decidedly not the vestigial links to a more fully developed literature; rather, Cary's commitment to progress shows that he, like almost every Canadian poet since his time, belongs to what Soja calls "the spatio-temporal rhythm of capitalist development, a macrospective conjunction of periodicity and spatialization that is induced from the successful survival of capitalist societies over the past two hundred years" (3). In the terms of this study, Soja's "macrospective conjunction" shows that Cary's eighteenth-century enthusiasm for clearing land and for its subsequent cultivation has its western and more contemporary echo in the father figure of Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue," whose version of progress runs thus:

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[104] Marie Tremaine also notes that Cary's optimistic picture of Quebec's agricultural riches ignores the predicament of 1789 (272).

> Son, this is a crowbar.
> This is a willow fencepost.
> This is a sledge.
> This is a roll of barbed wire.
> This is a bag of staples.
> This is a claw hammer.
>
> We give form to this land by running
> a series of posts and three strands
> of barbed wire around a ¼-section (31)

Although more will be said about this passage later, for the present, it is enough to underline the fact that both poems celebrate, even if ironically in Kroetsch's case, the necessity and desirability of moulding the land of Canada by labour and by verse. This similarity between the two poems also recalls Soja's contention that the "present period" is neither postmodern, nor postcolonial, nor poststructural. He argues, instead, that it should be viewed as "another deep and broad restructuring of modernity rather than as a complete break and replacement of all progressive, post-Enlightenment thought" (5).[105] Soja's point is particularly apposite in a Canadian context, for our collective definition of our society—a dominion—has evolved in a fashion that emphasizes continuity rather than discontinuity with the past and with the intellectual traditions that shaped our country.

As a final point in this portion of the discussion, it is worthwhile to reinforce that Cary's age had a considerable dedication to progress, and, further, that Cary himself connected progress with an improved climate. The probability that he held to some form of climatic amelioration is strengthened at least to some degree by the fact that, while editor of the Quebec Mercury, Cary saw fit on 20 July 1805 to publish a letter from an inhabitant of the "St. Lawrence country" extolling the advantages of that region over any locale in the United States. The correspondent's topographical sketch praises the "great abundance" in the harvests of "corn, oats, pease" and "every species of grain"; even though he admits the climate is cold, he is "confident" that when "the country becomes cleared up" spring will come within "ten or twelve days" sooner ("Extract" 225). The sketch's peroration differs little from the overall tenor of Cary's poem: "the improvements which are now going on in the county, will, in a little time, dissipate its appearance as a new country, by making it assume the countenance of a highly cultivated and wealthy country" (226). The way in which the anonymous author juxtaposes "county" with "country" in the final paragraph of the sketch is likely a typesetting error because "country" is used in every other instance, but this fortuitous slippage between the specific and the general points toward the connotative richness of the community that associated and identified itself with the St. Lawrence River.

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[105] For a rather different perspective on progress, one linked, nevertheless, to chorographical and topographical writing, see Helgerson 139-46. In his treatment of Elizabethan topographia, Helgerson argues that the "land itself" becomes an "impersonal third figure" which invades and usurps the tradition of the royal progress, a function which he sees as an advancement of authorial power.

III

If, however, Cary's "infant world" is understood as a country or nation in more conventional political terms, then caution is due, for either word assumes, particularly in Canada, an altogether too settled state of affairs, one which does little justice to the process by which this country emerged, evolved, and expanded as a territorial and political entity. With respect to the case at hand, there is a kind of ephemerality about Cary's Province of Quebec that issues from its temporal context. Cary wrote just two years before a new official and geographical unit, Lower Canada, superseded the former colonial province which was founded by the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and dissolved by the Constitutional Act of 1791. In its turn, Lower Canada lasted barely five decades before the Act of Union in 1841 joined the two Canadas to form the Province of Canada, an entity which itself was transformed into the Dominion of Canada by the Constitution Act of 1867. That the appellation "Dominion" was retained as Canada's official title in the Constitution Act of 1982 only highlights the need to conceive of Cary's province in ways more nuanced than the standardized terms—colony and nation—of contemporary critical theory permit. By way of two questions, MacLaren discloses the unsuitability of the colony-nation binary as a critical apparatus for early Canadian writing. Noting first that the sense of local pride and society figured in poems like Abram's Plains "evolved towards *dominion*," MacLaren asks:

> How, then, can the evaluation of early Canadian culture be properly undertaken with any critical

> perspectives—Modernism, post-colonialism—that implicitly value *republic* ~~as~~ the model by which ideally to form collectivities? Innocent of Canadian literary history, what must critical orientations ignore about the past if they posit, however unconsciously, a republican view of Canada? (Review 216)

What is needed, then, is an approach to Cary's historical setting that allows readers to attend to the fact that the idea of nation building was anathema to most Canadians because they had witnessed not only the failed American invasion of Canada at the time of the American Revolution but also the influx of Loyalist refugees who bore witness to the chaos of revolution.[106] Cary unquestionably had these events in mind, for he notes of "how small avail!" (*524*) were General Benedict Arnold's efforts to take Quebec by force in the winter of 1775-76. Of the Loyalists, Cary writes an extended passage, an excerpt of which shows his appreciation for the British peace that prevails in Quebec:

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[106] Although Abram's Plains was released during the same year of the French Revolution, the poem was likely published c. 12-14 March 1789 (Bentley, "Introduction" 42). This early date makes impossible in Abram's Plains any direct commentary on the events which took place in Paris during June and July of 1789 to foment the political

Here, shelter'd from the storm of civil broils,
The loyal sufferer renews his toils:
Again, from the unclog'd responsive earth,
Calls a new patrimony into birth.
By British magnanimity repaid,
The foe triumphant dare no more upbraid:
But wish he had so lost so to have gain'd,

(*64-70*)

The honorific tone of this passage indicates that Abram's Plains is directed toward the British middle and upper classes of Quebec (Bentley, Early 9), yet in addressing this audience Cary creates an availing paradox, one that anticipates the late nineteenth-century nationalist and imperialist urge, that is, Canada as the emerging strength of the British Empire, in his text. On one hand, he celebrates "*Britannia's* conqu'ring sword" (AP *434*) as the epitome of martial but ethical imperialism, and, on the other hand, he finds in Quebec the promise of a new world, one in which war exists only as a memory. This tension between imperial Britain and colonial Quebec is best examined by what Helgerson calls the "dialectic" of the topographical genre (138).

Although he locates his discussion within the national

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upheaval in France.

context of Britain, Helgerson's observation holds special applicability to topographical poetry emanating from colonial Canada, for Cary's poem displays a particularist urge in its catalogues of fishes, trees, crops, furs, animals, towns, villages, and even chefs of Quebec. These inventories are more than mere lists; they are a repository of place names and proper names that bespeak an attachment to place. This love of the local finds its dialectical counterpart in Cary's regard for Britain, but, significantly, the resolving synthesis between local devotion to Canada and patriotic allegiance to Britain is neither isolationist nor assimilationist; it arises, albeit inchoately at times, in the fluid locality of what Cary calls the "first of floods" (AP *211*). That is, he offers the St. Lawrence River as a means by which to resolve the problem of representing Canada as a discrete entity and, at the same time, of establishing very necessary connections, not the least of which were economic, between the province and the world beyond it. As Herendeen notes, in topographical writing, the river is "the agent of geographical and political unity, and it both distinguishes the nation and unites it inextricably with the larger world" (147). Implicit in this arrangement is the very structure of a dominion: a colony, but one that is self-governing. One must be quick to add that Herendeen's model should be modified to suit Cary's colonial situation by the substitution of "locality" for "nation," yet, Herendeen's perspective on the river makes it an inherently dialectical entity, so his paradigm corresponds very closely to Helgerson's dialectical model, particularly because the great distance between the head and the mouth of a major river almost always implies a tension between two locales. This tension, however, is never one of complete equipoise; rather, one locality becomes privileged. Thus, even though Cary pays a certain allegiance to Britain in Abram's Plains, his loyalty to Canada, specifically to the St. Lawrence region, arises as the stronger impulse in the poem if for no other reason than that his middle-class livelihood depended on a local mercantile economy that grew in spite of the indifference of Britain's colonial administrators in Canada. However, to imagine that Cary had a firm idea of how to define the Province of Canada as a political unit, or even as an economic unit, is to make him less a poet and more a politician. It is important to remember that Abram's Plains, like all poems, finds its power in suggestion, and its suggestiveness grows out of the river poem's ability to adumbrate a relation between hydrography and polity.

Cary unquestionably appreciated this relation, for, almost immediately after he makes his initial apostrophe to them, the Plains of Abraham fade from immediate view. No longer on even the elevated prospect of the Upper Town cliffs adjacent to the Plains of Abraham, Cary assumes a bird's eye view to look out over the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River watershed, which thus becomes the chief subject of the poem, and, as noted earlier, the principal source of its structure. In a second apostrophe, Cary addresses the river:

> Thy flood Saint Lawrence, in whose copious wave
> The Naiades of a thousand riv'lets lave:
> Through whom, fresh seas, from mighty urns descend,
> And, in one stream, their many waters blend.
> Thee, first of lakes! as *Asia's Caspian* great,
> Where congregated streams hold icy state.
> (*17-22*)

Cary's verbs of hydraulic motion—"lave . . . descend . . . blend"—highlight the counterpoint effected by his eye's rapid movement upstream from Quebec City to the river's inland watershed, represented by the "first of lakes," that is, Lake Superior. With something of a pendular motion, having ascended the waterway, presumably to Grand Portage—

the central *entrepôt* of the North West Company—he then descends through lakes Huron, Michigan, Erie, and Ontario before returning to the St. Lawrence to enumerate its many reaches, tributaries, and settlements. In nearly every case, Cary hails the notable topographical features along the way with a characteristic "thee" or "thy." This habitual use of apostrophe throughout Abram's Plains is to be expected since it is one of the key elements of topographical poetry (Aubin 10).

More than an ornament, however, apostrophe is particularly useful for grounding the speaker of the poem in the local because it almost always takes the form of articulating place names. Huron, Michigan, Erie, Niagara, Ontario, Utawas (Ottawa), Montreal, Champlain, Quebec, St. Charles, Cape Diamond, Lorette, Cape Rouge, Chaudiere, and Montmorenci are but some of the more notable lakes, rivers, and places hailed; their role, I argue, is to provide the texture of locality. In a generically appropriate act, Cary makes apostrophe into a device that topologizes the watershed of the St. Lawrence by fixing each name in its place. Apostrophe, especially as used by Cary, implies an additional layer of local significance. In each address, the land itself becomes personified, identified, as well as humanized, and thus set in relation to the narrator's voice.[107] This understanding of the relation of apostrophe to locality is nearly the opposite of that held by Jonathan Culler, one of the few critics to treat apostrophe at length, who says that the trope, especially in lyric poetry, serves to create a "timeless present" which resists the sequential order of narrative (149). Although he uses spatial language, calling apostrophe the device by which a poem's elements are "located," Culler argues that the apostrophized subjects and objects are situated only within a kind of special literary time or "event" (the poem itself), but he never considers that apostrophe fixes the poem, its speaker, and its audience in a place (149). In short, Culler makes apostrophe mean "now," not "here" *and* "now."

By using apostrophe to weave a fabric of local names, Cary shows that his allegiance to king and country—demonstrated in his injunction to the Canadiens, "And bless, beneath a GEORGE, your better fate" (*451*) and in his praise of the "sons of *Britain*" (*287*)—is being directed to a single focal point—country, as figured in the host of Canadian countryside names, as well as in the figurative parliament, the "icy state" of the many anonymous but

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[107] I owe these added significances of apostrophe to comments from MacLaren on an earlier draft of this

"congregated streams" (*22*) which the poem assembles (Helgerson 133). Connecting all these places by means of the St. Lawrence River, Cary demonstrates the acuity of Herendeen's observation that when rivers are present in topographical writing they become the "*locus communis*" in which the "meaning of the work is concentrated" (15).

In Abram's Plains the St. Lawrence thus serves, according to Herendeen's use of the term *locus*, a twofold rhetorical function, for it retains its geographical identity and situatedness at the same time as it becomes a subject that the poet explores in his "mind's eye and transforms through the process of description" (15). Herendeen's emphasis on the "mind's eye" accords well with the perspective taken by Cary, for his bird's eye view, which reaches all the way up the St. Lawrence to Lake Superior, and transforms the waterway into a chart or map punctuated with picturesque viewpoints.

Combined, Cary's chart of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence waterway and his sketches of the vistas along the river's banks perform the same work as nearly all river poems in the topographical tradition; it gives a sense of "national self-consciousness" by bringing together "observations on the natural and artistic beauties of the realm within a

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argument.

more or less geographically coherent view" of the country (Herendeen 146-47). Although Herendeen's paradigm belongs to the national context of Britain, it is easily reformed to suit pre-Confederation Canada because his description of the interplay between the landscape and the writer indicates that the process of forming a "self-consciousness" often takes the shape of a search; "he moves from place to place, topic to topic, in the pursuit of understanding" (15). [108] This emphasis on the heuristic quality of topographical writing is amplified in a second observation by Herendeen: "The discovery of places, or topoi, is the process by which a writer strives to realize thought" (15). By this understanding, one might say that Cary, like most topographical writers, undertakes his poetic task in an exploratory fashion. His act of describing the waterway as if it were visible at a glance prompts his reader to adopt a territorial, that is, topographical, view. In effect, Cary asks his reader to appreciate the fact that the edges of the poem's map are contiguous with the riverine routes through the North and West of Canada as well as with the mercantile trade routes that begin at the vast estuary formed between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

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[108] See Guillory, 3-17, for an argument that attempts to link the topographical genre to the rhetorical tradition and to the commonplace book.

The force of this geographical, economic, and ultimately political logic expresses itself in the work of other writers of the eighteenth century. In 1773, for example, the anonymous author of one historical account of North America describes the same territory that Cary does by observing that

> [t]he great River of St. Lawrence, which is twenty two leagues broad at its mouth, and whose source is not perfectly known, though traced more than 800 leagues up the country, almost entirely crosses Canada, forming in its course, several great lakes, some of which are of such extent, that they make be taken for seas. (History of the British Dominions 195)

The ability of this writer to contain the third largest drainage basin in North America within a single grammatical unit, even while admitting that its principal river originates from an unknown source, indicates the way in which the St. Lawrence is, on the one hand, an independent geographical feature with "a definite spatial context," and, on the other hand, one the "continuous" dimension of which challenges our "epistemological concepts" (Herendeen

3). However, the same unnamed author, even without firm knowledge of the river's head, could follow

> the River Saint Lawrence, above what is called the Province of Quebec to the prospect in the future, not only of a flourishing province, but a great kingdom, exceeding in territory most of the kingdoms of Europe, and exceeded by few in the fertility of its soil, or the salubrity of its air. (213)

This author's use of "kingdom" recalls Herendeen's equation of the river with the nation, but neither term is an entirely inconsistent way by which to describe the territory along the St. Lawrence in the eighteenth century, if Donald Creighton's perspective on that region and economy is admitted to this discussion.

Creighton's eminent work, The Empire of the St. Lawrence, even by its title discloses the very thing that Cary heuristically strives to realize throughout the whole of Abram's Plains: a Laurentian economy controlled neither by the Indians, the French, the British, nor the Americans. Rather than identify with any of these, Cary, as was typical of the merchant class in eighteenth-century Quebec, wished for a *laissez-faire* arrangement with each of these groups in order to foster the greatest economic gain for

Quebec. Viewed from a material perspective, Abram's Plains is effectively a businessman's poem, one that recalls the fact that Cary came to Quebec in the employ of a merchant. Creighton's observation on the larger pattern of immigration to Quebec—"the first British Canadians were merchants before they were Britons, Protestants, or political theorists"—is consistent with Daniel Gauvin's remark that Cary lived first in "L'Assomption, in the Montreal region" and made his living "selling spirits" (123). As well, Gauvin notes that in 1779 Cary also lived in and sold provisions from the home of Mathew Lymburner (123), who was among the group of Scottish merchants—notables include George McBeath, Simon McTavish, Richard Dobie, James McGill, James Finlay, and John and William Grant—who eventually controlled the economies of Montreal and Quebec. Although many of these merchants ventured into other trades, the only commercial economy of enduring significance was the fur trade. Cary reflects this significance by the priority he gives to it, and to the St. Lawrence watershed, for it was the means by which to transport the great inland wealth of Canada to Montreal and Quebec, and from there to the other mercantile centres of the world.

The Laurentian commercial philosophy is synonymous with the fur trade; far from being peripheral to Cary's historical context, the fur trade provided over seventy percent of Quebec's economy in the late eighteenth century. Thus Cary focuses not just on commerce in general but also on the most powerful economic force of his time. As Creighton notes, "during the first quarter-century of British rule . . . there was built up a new commercial personnel, devoted to the river and dedicated to the realization of its promises" (23). In light of this "dedication," it is difficult to imagine that Cary would have been unaware that the fur trade brought a form of continentalism with it, for at the time of the Conquest, Britain's colonial territory in North America reached from the Gulf of Mexico to the High Arctic. Writing in 1789, Cary had just recently witnessed the amalgamation in 1787 of Gregory, McLeod, and Company with McTavish, Frobisher, and Company, the two Montreal-based fur trading rivals. The merger created the most ambitious and aggressive version of the North West Company yet seen. In what might be called a merchant's reworking of Spenser's marriage of the Medway and the Thames, Cary uses the Ottawa and St. Lawrence Rivers to celebrate the "Great mart" of Montreal, the centre of the fur trade:

> Then to the Utawas, in wedlock bound,

> Thy city Montreal, the streams surround.
> Great mart! where center all the forest's spoils,
> The furry treasures of the hunter's toils:
> Within thy walls the painted nations pour,
> And smiling wealth on thy blest traders show'r.
>
> (*79-83*)

In its apposition of nuptials—"in wedlock bound"—and "smiling wealth" this passage might well have the merger of the North West Company—"blest traders"—in mind. The periphrasis—"painted nations"—recognizes the indispensable contribution that Aboriginals made to the fur trade and clarifies that Cary understood that "the commercial system of the St. Lawrence linked the Indians with the northern commercial state" (Creighton 31-32). As Creighton puts it, "the merchants and the Indians were the eastern and western partners of the fur trade" (32). This east-west partnership shows early evidence of the reality that "transcontinentalism, the westward drive of corporations encouraged and followed by the super-corporation of the state, is the major theme in Canadian political life; and it was stated, in its first simplicity, by the fur trade" (Creighton 16).

In Cary's historical context, the "westward drive" of the fur trade began in earnest, for the Treaty of Paris in

1783 drew between Canada and the United States a boundary whose westerly reach began where the forty-fifth parallel of latitude intersects the St. Lawrence River. Extending through the Great Lakes, the boundary left the northwestern aspect of Lake Superior to strike for Rainy Lake and from there to the Mississippi River. The Quebec merchants were obviously not represented at the negotiations between the British and Americans at Paris, so they lost the fur trading area between the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Partly because of this loss and partly because this southerly area was under a good deal of trapping pressure, the more bold fur trading companies began to move up into the North and West of Canada, effectively setting the course for the emergence of a distinctively Canadian economy that by virtue of competition opposed the English Hudson's Bay Company. By the late 1780s, after resolving to move into Canada's northwest, the merchants of Quebec became what Creighton calls the first "Canadians in the modern sense of the term; they alone thought in terms of a distinct and continental economy" (79). Perhaps the most definitive expression of this reality occurred four years before Cary wrote his poem, when Peter Pond, a wintering partner with the North West Company, mapped the Methye Portage, the height of land that divides the Hudson Bay and

Arctic drainage basins. Pond's map enabled Alexander Mackenzie to make his voyage in 1789 to the Arctic on the river that now bears his name. Mackenzie's trip, of course, was undertaken in the name of the North West Company for purely commercial reasons. Pond, in true entrepreneurial style, produced three versions of his map for three prospective patrons—the government of the United States, the Empress of Russia, and the Parliament of England—demonstrating, in a phrase, that the continent was 'up for grabs' (MacLaren, "Alexander MacKenzie" 150).

This reality helps to explain why Cary's demonstrations of local pride extend themselves to continental proportions, to other places with equal territorial scope, countries such as India, South America, and Russia. These comparisons cast Canadian furs alongside precious metals and gems in terms of their value:

> What tho' no mines their gold pour through thy stream,
> Nor shining silver from thy waters gleam;
> Equal to these, the forests yield their spoils,
> And richly pay the skilful hunter's toils.
> The beaver's silken fur to grace the head,
> And, on the soldier's front assurance spread;
>
> (*196-99*)

. . . .

The martin's sables to adorn the fair,
And aid the silk-worm to set off her air.
Gems of Golconda or Potosi's mines,
Than these not more assist her eyes' designs
(*202-05*)

Following these comparisons to Golconda and Potosi, the diamond mining centre of India and one of the richest silver mining areas of South America, Cary makes a further leap:

Nor is it want of climate or of soil
Thy shores not more the Muscovite's yet foil:
Our infant world asks but time's fost'ring hand,
Its faculties must by degrees expand.
(*219-21*)

His choice to compare the Province of Quebec with Russia suggests further evidence of Cary's commitment to the idea of a northern economy, not simply an aesthetic of the North. It is also likely that Cary's juxtaposition of Russia and Quebec was more intentional than accidental given the historical circumstance that made Catherine II empress of Russia from 1762 to 1796, some three decades of rule that nearly coincide with the length of time history allocated to the Province of Quebec. Although Cary would have unquestionably repudiated many of the Russian monarch's personal actions, as a ruler she governed the largest, most resourceful, and most populous state in Europe, so Cary's comparison of Quebec to Russia says much for his ambitions, and it implies that he may have had certain sympathies with many Russian policies (Dmytryshyn 313). It is true that England and Russia had found themselves on opposing sides during the Seven Years' War, but in the decades that followed the war's resolution, Russia and England shared a distrust and antipathy for France, and these sentiments even the irenic Cary displays in his poem.

In the historical context of colonial Canada, then, it is the breadth of vision that makes Cary's poem so remarkable for he seems to grasp, if only by virtue of his placing it at the heart of his poem, that the St. Lawrence had been the *rivière du Canada* during the time of Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain, and that even when renamed the "St. Laurent" or St. Lawrence, it remained (and arguably remains) the river of Canada partly for its historic importance and partly for its ongoing economic importance. Cary's emphasis on the St. Lawrence is, as Bentley notes, an "extraordinary, intuitive understanding"

("Introduction" xiv) of its importance as a shaping force in Canadian history and culture. In this context, Creighton is worth citing at length because he so clearly articulates the role the river played in defining Canada and connecting it to Europe:

> It seemed the destined pathway of North American trade; and from the river there rose, like an exhalation, the dream of western commercial empire. The river was to be the basis of a great transportation system by which the manufactures of the old world could be exchanged for the staple products of the new. (6)

This emphasis on the river's intermediary role between old and new worlds was apparently not lost on Cary, for he closes Abram's Plains by arriving at the Gulf of the St. Lawrence at day's end. The tenebrous setting—"Now shade o'er shade steals gradual on the sight, / Darkness shuts up the scene and all is night" (*580-81*)—lets the river become a fit symbol for the "cultural liminality" of Quebec, for it is, at Cary's juncture of history, an emergent community set in relation to Britain (Bhabha 299).

IV

Where the previous section characterized Abram's Plains as an illuminated or illustrated map and drew out some of the historical, economic, and territorial significance of its Laurentian scope, the ensuing pages examine the poem's dual modes of representation. The first mode is topographical. Because Cary employs the convention of the bird's eye view while in this mode, it is also a cartographic tendency that employs the smallest of scales to sketch the enormous size of the territory represented. The second mode is the picturesque aesthetic of landscape representation; it is the source of the poem's scenery; its composed views are presented in verse structures that mimic the ways in which picturesque theory dictated how the eye should move over a landscape. These two modes—the topographical and the picturesque—are a study in the animating tensions of Cary's poem.

The topographical mode can be grand in scope, the picturesque only modest; the topographical mode displays Cary's emerging Canadian predilections; the picturesque, his English origins. Ideologically, however, the two modes do not so much negate as complement one another, for the picturesque disguises and naturalizes the territorial and economic scope of the topographical mode. In order to understand why the picturesque palliates the poem's topographical discourse one must consider the bird's eye view in more detail.

The OED indicates that just one English use of the expression "bird's eye view" occurred before 1789, the publication date of Abram's Plains; Horace Walpole employed it in his Anecdotes of Painting in England (1762-71). Describing a landscape painting by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), Walpole remarks that "exhibits an almost bird's eye view of an extensive country" (II, 146). The bird's eye convention came late to England, but it was in widespread use on the Continent, chiefly the Netherlands, as early as the sixteenth century. Boudewijn Bakker argues that the bird's eye view allowed topographical and cartographical modes of painting to merge, so the use of the bird's eye view in poetry unquestionably owes much to continental topographical painting of landscapes and cityscapes. However, the bird's eye view appears quite early in poetry, as well. Cooper's Hill, by Denham, uses not quite a bird's eye view, but its elevated prospect set a trend the force of which was nearly inescapable for later topographical poets.[109]

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[109] See Aubin (35-36) for a discussion of Cooper's Hill. Aubin identifies this poem as one of the chief sources of the extremely popular "hill poem" of the eighteenth century. Later, Aubin notes also that, after 1760, engravings began to accompany the text of many hill poems (66); this combination of visual and verbal representations of viewpoints testifies to the appropriateness of connecting the use of the bird's eye view as it had

The obvious reason for adopting a bird's eye view lies in its "slanting projection, as if the artist sat looking from a high viewpoint," which allowed three-dimensional representation of prominent elements in the scene. The elevated view also allowed compression of a larger view "in summary manner" (Bakker 68-69).[110] Bakker also notes that with "the rapid spread of trigonometric measurement in the mid-sixteenth century" it became possible to render more geometrically accurate plans of cityscapes, but "the custom of rendering elevations in slanting projection continued,

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appeared in sixteenth-century topographical painting with its use in the eighteenth-century topographical poem. A more conjectural note should be raised here as well. Aubin identifies the telescope, both in use and in Milton's example, with the appearance of an English taste for elevated prospects (277 n272). Although Cary makes no overt allusion to any of Milton's poetic uses of the telescope, the first issue of the newspaper, the Quebec Mercury, which Cary founded in 1805, some sixteen years after he wrote Abram's Plains, confirms he was in possession of a telescope. On the last page is the notice of an upcoming auction to be held at the "union Tavern, upper-town, on Monday evening the 14th instant" ("By Auction" 8). Among other things, on the block is a "perspective box for viewing prints with 27 views, a fine toned guitar, Spy-glasses" and "Mathematical Instruments" ("By Auction" 8).

[110] An excellent example of this kind of bird's eye view appears under Marc Vallières' entry on "Quebec City" in the second edition of The Canadian Encyclopedia (1806). Dated 1664, this painting looks eastward beyond Île d'Orleans. In the foreground the scale is more detailed, and the topographical relief of the river banks is also depicted. This seventeenth-century representation of a Canadian scene testifies to the currency of the elevated and slanting projection of the bird's eye view in Cary's time.

even in 'modern,' orthogonally projected, maps" (69). It is this last observation that warrants designating the bird's eye view of Abram's Plains as a cartographic impulse. However, even though cartography is usually conceived of as an empirical and objective means of representing reality, it too is a discourse steeped in what J.B. Harley calls the "politics of knowledge" (232).

These politics appear in the very perspective of the bird's eye view. As Bentley observes, it is "with the downward and condescending gaze of one who occupies the racial and imperial high ground, that Cary observes the Huron settlement at Lorette" (Mimic 33). In this instance, Cary is mapping not so much the topography of Canada as its human geography. These two activities intersect, however, for the bird's eye view is analogous to the "spatial panopticon" which "manufacture[s] power," power which enables the map's creator to possess.[111] Cary's elevated viewpoint is one that enables him to exercise an imperial power to own all that he sees. It is of no avail, however, to argue either for or against what intention underlies Cary's use of the bird's eye view, for the power exercised by it is analogous to the power exercised by any form of map. A helpful clarification on this point exists in Harley's contention that cartography is a discourse, and, therefore, its effects transcend "the simple categories of `intended' and `unintended' altogether" (245). Yet, without suggesting that Cary could somehow stand outside the ideological umbrella implied in any discursive paradigm, one can appropriately posit that the bird's eye view of the poem, if only for aesthetic reasons, demanded a more human perspective to palliate it. This contention, however, in itself entails an examination of one of the most important ideologies of Cary's day.

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[111] Roland Barthes' "Right in the Eyes" remains one of the clearest, most convincing discussions of the gaze in terms

Cary's understanding of the dominant social theory of his century is amply displayed in these lines:

> And, from the waters, bid the woods recoil!
> But oh! a task of more exalted kind,
> To arts of peace, to tame the savage mind;
> The thirst of blood, in human breasts, to shame,
> To wrest, from barb'rous vice, fair virtue's
> name;
> Bid tomahawks to ploughshares yield the sway,
> And skalping-knives to pruning hooks give way;
> *(59-65)*

The distinction drawn here between "barb'rous vice" and

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of possession (237-38).

"fair virtue's name" arises from the so-called "four stages theory" of social development, which as Ronald L. Meek has demonstrated "was destined not only to dominate socio-economic thought in Europe in the latter half of the eighteenth century, but also to become of crucial significance in the subsequent development of economics, sociology, anthropology, and historiography, right down to our own time" (2).[112] This theory, fraught with ideologies of progress, argues that all societies develop through four hierarchically arranged steps, each corresponding to a different mode of subsistence. These modes and phases combine to produce four gradations: (1) the savage stage, supported by hunting; (2) the pastoral or barbaric stage, supported by herding; (3) the agricultural stage, supported by farming; and, (4) the commercial stage, supported by trading (Meek 2). As Meek notes, the stages were viewed as progressive steps, so the theory itself was incompatible with any "'primitivist' idealisation of the first stage" (17). The connections that this theory made between a society's mode of subsistence and the development of its customs, morals, and manners help to explain why Cary places so much emphasis on agriculture, particularly its relation to culture. Thus it was held that with the arrival of the third stage of development a society was able to gain enough leisure to cultivate the arts. In other words, a society based on hunting and trapping was, perforce, a primitive culture, one in which it would be unimaginable that Cary could find time to "sit and court the Muse," to produce a poem directed at "lovers of polite learning" (AP *2*, 1).[113]

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[112] My use of the four stages theory is indebted to Bentley's very thorough application of it in his reading of Oliver Goldsmith's The Rising Village ("Oliver Goldsmith and The Rising Village" 21-61). Bentley also grounds his discussion of Abram's Plains in the four stages theory

Cary's emphasis on agriculture was almost certainly motivated by other factors, for, by the precepts of the four stages theory, the fur trade was necessarily an ambivalent economic practice. On the one hand, its foundations were trapping and hunting, activities which were characterized as primitive modes of subsistence, but, on the other hand, its mercantile aspect belonged to the most advanced society—the commercial culture. This duality helps to explain why Cary draws a distinction between the "painted nations," the hunters and trappers, and the "blest traders" who profit from the commercial facet of the

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(Mimic 31-33).

[113] See Bentley ("Introduction" xxix) for a discussion of the "'leisure theory'" of Canadian literature and Abram's

venture (AP *82-83*). Moreover, the unsettling reality that Cary's flourishing and "polish'd" (*417*) society, was, at bottom, based on hunting and trapping helps to reveal why Abram's Plains so vigorously asserts "Ceres' praise" as a civilizing influence (*45*).

In affecting to style Quebec as a refined center of culture, Cary might have been aware of the moralistic perspective that a number of later theorists brought to the four stages theory. Chief among these writers was Adam Ferguson whose Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767) warned of the internal decay or decadence accompanying the commercial stage of societal development.[114] As a response to this threat from within, many social theorists of the late eighteenth century advocated not a Rousseauian return to a primitive, nobler state but an "eternal vigilance" and a kind of *via media* that combined the best of the agricultural and commercial phases of development (Meek 155). Cary demonstrates this middle way when he exhorts that "moderation reign, / And moral virtues humanize the plain!" (*62-63*). The context of this exhortation is the

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Plains.

[114] See Meek, 150-55, for a summary and discussion of Ferguson's work.

longer passage quoted previously, the final couplet of which—"Bid tomahawks to ploughshares yield the sway, / And skalping-knives to pruning hooks give way" (*60-61*)—echoes the oracular eschatological peace and plenty of the messianic age envisioned in Isaiah 2:2-4:

> In the last days
>
> . . . .
>
> He will judge between the nations
> and will settle disputes for many peoples.
> They will beat their swords into plowshares
> and their spears into pruning hooks.
> Nation will not take up sword against nation,
> nor will they train for war anymore.[115]

Such extravagance, no doubt, prompted Cary's immediate qualifying use of "moderation" in apposition to the image of a well-ordered landscape, a "humanize[d]" plain. Other examples of this tempering impulse abound in the poem, particularly in the extended moralizing discourse on the foolish ambitions of humankind as they are figured in war

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[115] See also Micah 4:1-4. This passage repeats the sense of Isaiah, but the fourth verse adds these lines: "Every man will sit under his own vine / and every man under his own fig tree." Cary, it will be remembered, opens his poem in an arboreal setting—"hid in shades," free "from care and noise"—that evokes Micah's emphasis on peaceful repose (*2-3*).

(AP *300-61*).

Fittingly, however, the middle ground that Cary establishes between the "polish'd town" with its "god of trade" (*417, 115*) and the agricultural mode of subsistence arises in his use of the picturesque. This aesthetic, as Barrell carefully explains, is a means of representing a tract of land—chiefly by painting, by gardening, and by writing—as if it were a picture. As well, it must emphasized, the picturesque is also a way of perceiving land in pictorial terms, of interpreting land as landscape (1-7).[116] The most conspicuous feature of the picturesque mode in Abram's Plains is the frequency with which Cary uses it to make his numerous illustrations of the landscape views along the banks of the St. Lawrence. It is not necessary to examine each of these scenes in detail, however, because a composite of them places on view the poem's picturesque elements:

> There, on thy banks, *Saint Charles*, rich meadows vie,
> In vivid green, to ease the dazzled eye.
> The slow meand'ring stream that tardy moves,
> Dispenses fatness through the meads and groves:

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[116] See Hussey (9) for an etymology of "picturesque" that connects the word with the Italian term "pittoresco"

(*398-401*)

. . . .

Here milch-kine lowing leave the grazing field,
And glad to man their milky homage yield;

(*408-09*)

. . . .

Next *Charlebourg*, blest in a bounteous soil,
Where plenteous harvests pay the lab'ror's toil.
Thy beauties, *Beauport*, open on mine eyes,
There fertile fields and breezy lawns arise;

(*418-21*)

Although these passages do not show Cary's most technically polished use of the picturesque, they display his use of vectors such as "there . . . / here . . . / next"; MacLaren identifies this kind of diction with Pope's adaptation of picturesque principles to poetry ("The Influence" 69-70). These adverbial markers serve not only to direct the eye to each scene but also to hold it, "to ease the dazzled eye," within the relatively small picturesque elements—streams, meads, groves, fields, lawns—which provide the visual intricacy and balance requisite to the aesthetic. In what might be taken as a capsule statement of the work wrought

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("after the manner of a painter").

by the picturesque, Cary pauses to say, "Thence glancing round with comprehensive view, / The varied landscape pleas'd my eyes pursue (*491-92*), and thus to indicate that he has successfully made at least some of Quebec's environs into a sufficiently comforting scene.

Cary's "pleas'd eyes" suggest an additional reason for his frequent shift into picturesque description. That is, the pictorial ingredients of the picturesque, which is chiefly an English aesthetic, belong to the hill and dale topography of the home counties. In the context of Abram's Plains, the picturesque affords Cary a means of counterbalancing the poem's topographical discourse by reducing its vast scope into more digestible units (MacLaren, "The Influence" 78).[117] Although this type of visual and verbal control may seem insignificant, it must be remembered that topographical poems, especially those from the eighteenth century, strive to make their structure reflect what Foster calls a "moral design" (397). In many instances, the moral theme is only loosely connected with the landscape described, for example, the virtue of local sons and heroes, but Foster takes care to point out that from the "interaction of space and time" (both literally and figuratively) "comes the morality of the poem" (400-01).

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[117] In his article "Alexander Mackenzie and the Landscapes of Commerce," MacLaren discusses the role of William Combe, the ghost writer of Mackenzie's Voyages, in aesthetising the explorer's descriptions of Canada's North and West. In his close reading of what is likely Combe's embellishment of the westward view from the Methye Portage into the Clearwater River valley, MacLaren notes that the extensive prospect is rendered picturesque by its small scale foreground (146). Explaining the purpose of this aestheticization, he says that the picturesque serves to "convey the prospect as a safe, secure venture" (149). The explorer's commercial goal of exploiting the Athabasca region for its fur trade riches thus enjoys the picturesque's special ability to represent an illusory, but completely convincing in the eighteenth century, portrait of a harmonious relationship between man and nature.

To find an example of this neo-classical parallel between landscape and morality, one need look no further than Pope's moral essay, the Epistle to Burlington, to discover an injunction against the "grand Error" of supposing that "Greatness consists in Size and Dimension, instead of the Proportion and Harmony of the whole" (587). Pope's concern, and that of nearly all other theorists of landscape in the eighteenth century, lies not with a mere matter of taste; rather, it was reasoned, landscaping reflected on the characteristics of the composer, and, by extension, on the nature of the country and its people. A harmonious landscape of modest proportions thus betokened a virtuous and moderate landscaper.[118] To achieve a moderate scale of representation, the picturesque aesthetic relied on a rising background to restrict the landscape to something that the human eye (as it was trained by picturesque theory) could easily govern. It stands to reason, therefore, that the bird's eye convention was not considered picturesque; in this regard, Hussey notes that two of the influential theorists of the picturesque, Thomas Gray and William Gilpin, "agreed that 'birds' eyes' were not picturesque" (108).[119] In his poem on landscape painting Gilpin emphasizes that there existed no principles of selection and visual control in the elevated viewpoint. He dismisses it by saying it "is but a painted survey, a mere map" (qtd. in Hussey 21).

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[118] See MacLaren ("The Influence" 77-87) for a detailed discussion of this ideological dimension of the

Cary unquestionably understood the dominant aesthetic ideology of his century and his native country, for he registers nearly instantaneous discomfort when he allows his eye to rove over the expansive landscape along the St. Lawrence:

> Far as *Montmorenci*, thy pleasing stream,
> Romantic as a love-sick virgin's dream.

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picturesque.

[119] See Barrell (17-20) for an engaging analysis of Thomson's famous Hagley Park view in The Seasons ("Spring" 950-62). Barrell treats this passage not as a picturesque description but as a "prospect" (16). His interest is in illuminating the "problem of how a visual arrangement can

Beyond the vales, still stretching on my view,
Hills, behind hills, my aching eyes pursue.
'Till, in surrounding skies, I lose my way,
Where the long landscape fading dies away.

(*418-23*)

As these lines indicate, Cary's "aching eyes" quickly become bewildered by a "long landscape" the depth of which is no perceptual illusion wrought by the optical trick of perspective. In response, as if to demonstrate a virtuous temperament, Cary, rather than merely following, commands his Muse to backtrack to the "garden" of Île d'Orleans: "Now cross the flood, Muse, stretch thy roving flight, / And with green *Orleans* regale thy sight" (*428-29*). With its picturesque beauty and variety—"Here corn and fruits, here herbage, roots, and flow'rs, / Plenty, from her rich *cornucopia*, pours" (*432-33*)—this garden mollifies Cary's "aching eyes." This respite provides a necessary balance to the bravura voiced in the topographical or cartographical mode that Cary uses to sketch the Great Lakes and Niagara Falls.

Although it would be an overstatement to call Cary's topographical discourse subversive, it possesses a bluster decidedly out of place in an eighteenth-century

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be translated into a structure of words" (15).

topographical poem. Not to expound on them in detail, but to illustrate their swagger, it is worth citing some twenty lines of Abram's Plains, lines which, had they been written later in history, might make even an Albertan, one of Kroetsch's "A-1 Hard Northern bullshitters," applaud their emphasis on "Bigger" ("Seed Catalogue" 25):

> Thy flood Saint Lawrence, in whose copious wave
> The Naiades of a thousand riv'lets lave:
> Through whom, fresh seas, from mighty urns descend,
> And, in one stream, their many waters blend.
> Thee, first of lakes! as *Asia's Caspian* great,
> Where congregated streams hold icy state.
> *Huron*, distinguish'd by its thund'ring bay,
> Where full-charg'd clouds heav'n's ord'nance ceaseless play.
> Thee *Michigan*, where learned beavers lave,
> And two great tribes divided hold thy wave.
> *Erie* for serpents fam'd, whose noisome breath,
> By man inhal'd, conveys the venom'd death.
> The streams thence rushing with tremendous roar,
> Down thy dread fall, *Niagara*, prone pour;
> Back foaming, in thick hoary mists, they bound,
> The thund'ring noise deafens the country round,

Whilst echo, from her caves, redoubling sends the
sound.
'Twixt awe and pleasure, rapt in wild suspense,
Giddy, the gazer yields up ev'ry sense.
So have I felt when Handel's heavenly strains,
Choral, announce the great Messiah reigns:
Caught up by sound, I leave my earthly part,
And into something more than mortal start.
Now, in *Ontario's* urn, spacious they spread,
By added waters, from *Oswego*, fed;
(*17-41*)

It is true, as Bentley notes, that some of these poetic efforts are genuinely remarkable; for example, the run-on couplets describing the falls appropriately differ from the end-stopped ones that describe the Great Lakes (Mimic 30). Moreover, the only triplet in the poem (*31-33*) shows Cary's attempt "to recreate for the reader something of the movement, plangency and sheer sublimity" of the water's drop ("Introduction" xxxii), and in the final line of the tercet, as MacLaren notes, Cary adds an extra iamb, to produce a hexameter which "graces the laudable attempt" he makes to fit the strictures of a couplet to something as abundantly intractable as the falls are of containment ("Pastoral" 17). However, all this liquid majesty, the sublime thrill of the falls and the immense magnitude of the Great Lakes, suggests the source of the moderating impulse that surfaces following the description of the Great Lakes and Niagara Falls. This impulse is readily observed in Cary's most carefully composed view, one which shows his very respectable facility with the picturesque:

> Here hill and dale diversify the scene,
> There pensile woods cloth'd with eternal green;
> The russet plain with thorny brambles spread,
> Where clust'ring haws deep blush a ruddy red;
> The distant wood, wide-waving to the breeze,
> Where shining villas peep through crowded trees;
> Here babbling brooks gurgle adown the glade,
> There rise mementos of the soldier's spade;
> Where on the green-sward oft incamp'd they lay,
> Seen by the rising and the setting ray.
> Here, in life's vigour, *Wolfe* resign'd his breath,
> And, conqu'ring, sunk to the dark shades of death:
> (272-81)

Bentley is right to point out that Cary here "succeeds in composing the landscape as a painter would" ("Introduction" xxxv); credit is due also on the matters of colouration and the interplay of shadowy and luminous light so characteristic of picturesque landscape painting.

The final couplet of this passage presents a chiastic structure—between "life's vigour" and "the dark shades of death" as well as between "conqu'ring" and "resign'd his breath"—and thus prompts speculation that Cary may well have seen Benjamin West's famous painting, The Death of General Wolfe, which was, as Bentley points out, displayed at the Royal Academy in London in 1771 (Mimic 26). Simon Schama's description of the painting, a "stupendous piece of drama: brilliance and gloom, victory and death" (21), catches the very same contrasting elements that Cary depicts, and, further, it points to the interaction between landscape and the moral design of Abram's Plains.

By making Wolfe die "in life's vigour," Cary blatantly reconfigures the historical record on the general's health. As Hume records in his History of England, Wolfe in fact possessed a "naturally delicate and tender" constitution (148); moreover, Hume notes that just before the battle at the Plains of Abraham Wolfe had been "totally disabled" by "tumult of the mind" as well as "fever and dysentery" (148). Writing three decades after Wolfe's death, Cary ostensibly adopted his own version of the rhetoric that prompted West to write "Wolfe must not die like a common soldier under a Bush" (qtd. in Schama 28). The painter provided West's fuller explanation of his approach to painting Wolfe's death: "A mere matter of fact will never produce the effect" of "the highest idea conceivd of the Hero" (qtd. in Schama 28). This statement indicates that grandiloquence, not prosaic detail, was the surest road to take for making mere death into an apotheosis (qtd. in Schama 28). Thus, to make Wolfe, as Cary does, vigorously well before death renders his passing all the more tragic, all the more poignant as a study of the great forces of life and death.[120]

That Cary sententiously incorporates a reference to Wolfe's death into his most carefully composed picturesque view discloses what Bermingham calls the reversible "convenient ambiguous signification" of natural landscape and property at work in the picturesque, for Wolfe's victory is but a means of signifying conquest, which, in turn, is another way of placing on view Britain's rightful ownership of Quebec (14). Military conquest, however, was only one of the means by which Cary's poem asserts a claim on Quebec, for the four stages theory linked the third phase of societal development with the creation of privately owned property. Although there was no immediate drive to exploit the land of Quebec in the aftermath of the British conquest, by 1787 the merchants in the province were demanding that an English freehold tenure system replace the existing feudal system, and by 1788 they owned nearly all of the thirty seigniories that had formerly belonged to the so-called "'old subjects'" (Creighton 114, 28). Nevertheless, land belonging to Canadiens was not the chief object of the merchants in the 1780s and the decades that followed. Rather, because proponents of the four stages theory followed John Locke's influential theory of property, which in its most simple form made ownership of land lie with the person who "mixed his *Labour* with [it]," the Aboriginal peoples of Quebec held no rights to any land because they were still subsisting by the so-called savage mode of hunting, not tilling the land and thus accruing ownership (329).[121] The Royal Proclamation of 1763 had, it

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[120] An additional surmise is worth venturing at this point because it is in keeping with the overall design of the poem and Cary's version of the northern myth discussed some pages ago: just as West could not let Wolfe die "under a Bush," it is as likely that Cary could not let his poem's hero die under the suspicion that his poor health could be attributed to the severe climate of Canada. Although this conjecture has some credibility, it comprises only one

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small aspect of the ideology of the picturesque.

[121] Blackstone states the principle most succinctly: "tillage" confers the right of "permanent property in the soil" (1809, v.2: 7-8). See Bentley's "Concepts" for a discussion of land appropriation in early Canada.

is true, reserved a vast area for Aboriginals (all the regions lying west of the lands drained by rivers flowing to the Atlantic), but by the same proclamation all the land which had formerly been New France was claimed for King George III and so was removed from Aboriginal entitlement. Thus, when Cary writes of “two great tribes”—the Ottawa and the Ojibway—still with “hold” on Lake Michigan (AP *26*), he refers rather nostalgically to the Indian Territories which the British ceded to the Americans in the Treaty of Paris (1783).

The remembrance of former orders belongs especially to the picturesque aesthetic (Bermingham 70); it emerges in Cary’s admonition—“Bid tomahawks to ploughshares yield the sway, / And skalping-knives to pruning hooks give way” (*64-65*)—and in this longer more clearly aestheticized passage:

> Thence, further left, as I incline my eyes,
> Thy cottages, *Lorette*, to view arise;
> Here, of the copper-tribes, an half tam’d race,
> As villagers take up their resting place;
> Here fix’d, their houshold gods lay peaceful down,
> To learn the manners of the polish’d town.

(*412-17*)

These two descriptions of transformed Aboriginal culture tally with Bermingham's observation that "the picturesque was suited to express the complexity of the historical moment" (70). Although she refers to the agricultural transformation of the British countryside in the 1780s and 1790s, her insight applies to Cary's equally complex and transitional historical period. In much the same way that English practitioners of the picturesque romanticized a lost rural way of life, Cary is able, on one hand, to celebrate the Aboriginal past by speaking idealistically of "two great tribes," and, on another hand, to justify the suppression of that culture by contrasting its barbarous nature with picturesque vignettes of agrarian and villatic progress. In this regard, the picturesque functions to order not only the space of the poem but also its time, for each sketch of Quebec's picturesque countryside encodes the passage of the province's former rude ways.[122] The picturesque, as an ensconced English aesthetic, is used poetically to separate the Aboriginals from their land, which, as represented by the picturesque, appears entirely, solely, "naturally," and permanently English property.

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[122] In his Travels through the Canadas (1806), George Heriot describes the village of Lorette in terms that echo those of Cary. Heriot observes that the "Indians attend, with scrupulous observance, to the performance of their devotions" in the "small, but neat" chapel in the village (80-81).

Moreover, in ways that surpass stereotypical Saxon antipathy for Norman society, Cary regards the French-Canadians of the province as the "benighted victims of Roman Catholic superstition and irrationality" (Mimic 34), and they, like the Natives, are the benefactors of British prosperity:

> Be thankful swains, *Britannia's* conqu'ring sword,
> Releas'd you from your ancient sov'reign lord,
> . . . .
> Grateful, ye peasants, own your mended state,
> And bless, beneath a GEORGE, your better fate.
> *(434-35; 450-51)*

That Cary manages, on the one hand, to overlook the fact that agriculture was practised by several indigenous peoples of Central Canada, and, on the other hand, that the seigneurial land-tenure system was not eliminated under the Quebec Act of 1774, marks a salutary example of the discursive duality of the pastoral and picturesque elements at work in the poem. Cary's convenient amnesia points to the likelihood that he sought, either wilfully or unconsciously, to conceal the speed with which a rapidly growing population of Anglophones was displacing the indigenous populations and dominating the colonial Canadiens while radically transforming the land. Concern over the rapid transformation of the environs around Quebec City appears to underlie this passage on timber cutting:

> Whilst from *Malbay*, the mill's remorseless sound,
> And piteous groans of rending firrs, resound;
> Within whose rind, I shudder while I tell,
> Spirits of warriors close imprison'd dwell,
> Who in cold blood, butcher'd a valiant foe,
> For which, transform'd to weeping firrs, they grow:
> Down their tall trunks trickling the tears distill,
> 'Till last the ax and saw groaning they feel.
> (*146-53*)

This description of the sawmill at La Malbaie shows, as Bentley points out, that Cary associates "cacophony and pathos" with the rapid desolation of indigenous forests and peoples (Gay]Grey 176).[123] Cary's rueful tone is noteworthy because it displays what initially appears as a contradictory advocacy of an environmental ethic at odds with his earlier emphasis on clearing and cultivating land. Although it is tempting to read "the mill's remorseless sound" as an instance of an appreciation of the forest's intrinsic value, Cary is likely motivated by a more powerful economic logic: too much clearing would ensure there were no "forests [to] yield their spoils" (198). The "spoils" were furs not timbers, for the timber trade was just beginning to become an important aspect of Quebec's overall economy at the time of the poem's publication (Ruddel 113-15). No contradiction exists here, however, because the clearing and settling of land in Canada occurred only after a region had been stripped of its furs. As indicated previously, the late eighteenth-century fur trade based in Montreal and Quebec City focused on the upper reaches of the St. Lawrence River as well as the interior North and West of Canada; the lower reaches of the St. Lawrence were the agricultural areas of Canada partly because there were simply no more furs to harvest. The business of harvesting the timber that remained after the fur trader had moved on did grow in time to a substantial industry. Yet, in Cary's day, a forest devoid of fur-bearing animals was one that stood in need of clearing, not

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[123] Bentley's explanatory notes for his edition of Abram's Plains suggest links between this passage and Ovid's Metamorphoses and Carver's Travels (32-33). Cary may have also been influenced by the mythic and elegiac tone of Michael Drayton's lament for the destruction of Britain's forests. See Poly-Olbion (Song III, 149-56; Song VII, 275-

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least because the theory of climatic amelioration encouraged timber cutting and its concomitant improvement of the area's agricultural prospects. The three major economies of eighteenth-century Canada are thus implied in Cary's description of logging at Malbaie: the fur trade, which was primary; the timber trade, which was secondary; and agriculture, which was tertiary. The first of these corresponds not only to the region that became designated Upper Canada but also to the cartographic perspective of Cary's elevated prospect. From his bird's eye vantage point, Cary looks to the hinterlands for the promise of a Laurentian economy; from the lower perspective of the picturesque he adds "moral virtues" (*63*) to the society establishing itself in what became known as Lower Canada.

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Cary concludes his poem with another blend of "neo-classical diction and local content" (Bentley, Mimic 38) that displays the ability of the topographical poem to differentiate places and their citizens from other constituencies and locations:

> Now shade o'er shade steals gradual on the sight,
> Darkness shuts up the scene and all is night.
> Except, where darting cross the swampy marsh,

> From shining fire-flies lucid lightnings flash.
> When, from black sultry skies, long silver streams
> Send through the atmosphere their forked beams;
> With brighter glow then shoot the mimic fires,
> Each insect, *Cæsar* like, to rival Jove aspires.
> (*580-87*)

Bentley's reading of these lines draws out their relation to the writing of both Thomson and Carver, but, more significantly, he finds in Cary's fire-flies a "metaphor" which appropriately describes the "small but bright colony on the St. Lawrence" (Mimic 38). Because Bentley closes his discussion with this observation, he does not develop a full analysis of the metaphoric quality of the fire-flies, and he thus, fortuitously for the present study, leaves unexamined the mythic subject of comparison, "Jove." By way of concluding this examination of Abram's Plains, I want to consider the appropriateness of the figurative language that enlivens Cary's final lines.

"Jove," as Bentley points out in the "Explanatory Notes" that accompany his edition of Abram's Plains, is the Roman god Jupiter (42-43), the same god that Michael Stapleton characterizes as having "no mythology of his own" (128). Thus, to read beyond Cary's seemingly meaningless association of fire-flies with Jupiter's fire and lightning, one must retrieve the more resonant Greek meaning that the Romans transferred from Zeus to Jupiter. Read with the richer Hellenic associations that stand behind him, Jupiter becomes an entirely suitable figure to invoke at the poem's close, for he is a sky and weather god of migrating people (Stapleton 212). Writing thirty years after the British conquest, Cary was clearly aware that the bright future he forecast for the Province of Quebec was linked inextricably to migration; moreover, as a conceptual pair, sky and weather work together to recall, for one last time, Cary's conviction that the climate of Quebec was the source of the distinct identity of the people who lived there.[124] As a unifying factor, the importance of Quebec's climate was paramount because for thirty years after the British victory at the Plains of Abraham the population of Quebec grew extremely rapidly—from approximately 65 000 in 1760 to over 160 000 in 1790 (Foulds 1796); much of this growth was the result of Anglophone immigration, an increase in population which fundamentally altered the economy and culture of Quebec.[125] Even amidst such turbulent growth, perhaps figured in the stormy "black sultry skies" of his closing image, or in the rivalry of the fire-flies, Cary still displays his conservative, but uncannily Canadian, predilections, for Jupiter is, above all other things, the "personification of order through power" (Stapleton 212)—the very qualities which likely prompted Cary to title his poem after a battleground rather than a river, as Charles Sangster later did in his topographical poem, The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay (1856).

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[124] The Canadien population of New France increased at the rate of approximately 30 percent through the decades between 1761 and 1791 (Ruddel 253).

To argue that Cary's use of "Jove" should be read earnestly as a significant trope is to raise the possibility that the elevated imagery of the divine and sublime storm so pointedly contrasts with that of the fireflies as to render the whole movement of the poem's ending a deflationary piece of mock heroic verse. Cary's subject, however, is never rendered trivial in other parts of the poem, so it must be allowed that, as an Augustan, he shifts temporarily to a mock heroic tone for other purposes. These ends are suggestive of Austin Warren's contention that the mock heroic style allowed many Augustan poets to escape the intimidating shadow of the "Great Poem, of the Great Genius, of the (often correlated) Grand Style" (39). At the same time, it allowed them the means of rendering an "elegantly affectionate homage" to the poets and genres of antiquity (40). If one bears this likelihood in mind, it is no great leap to suggest that Cary's juxtaposition of fireflies and Jupiter is intended to recall Virgil's Georgics, in particular the fourth book, on bees. This probability not only fits the spirit of Cary's age and poem but also recalls his decision to adopt a fragment from the Georgics as the masthead epigraph for the Quebec Mercury. The line in question—"*Mores et studia et populos et prælia dicam*"—is worth citing in its full context because it helps to disclose more of the significance of Cary's conclusion to Abram's Plains:

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[125] See Ruddel (39-48) for a discussion on the impact of Anglophone immigration on the Canadien population of Quebec, particularly the subject of economic control of the

> The heavenly gift of honey from the air
> Is next my theme. Look kindly on this too,
> Maecenas. I will show you a spectacle
> To marvel at, a world in miniature,
> Gallant commanders and the institutions
> Of a whole nation, its character, pursuits,
> Communities and warfare. Little the scale
> To work on, yet not little is the glory

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urban economy.

(4.1-8)

Virgil's analogy between colonies of bees and nations seems to have been an irresistible, although recondite, means by which Cary could acknowledge a larger world outside his colonial situation, and, at the same time, to accept no diminution of "the institutions / Of a whole nation, its character, pursuits, / communities and warfare" such as they were in his Province of Quebec.[126] When these lines are conflated with the final lines of Abram's Plains it becomes difficult to leave untouched the larger Virgilian idea that governs book four of the Georgics, an idea which is tinged with no mockery whatsoever: that the play of great and small is, in fact, a gift of divine providence. This awareness certainly underlies Cary's frequent use of "blest" and the overall tone of local devotion that animates his poem.

A further enlivening aspect of Cary's genre of choice should be treated before this discussion closes. Cary, by adopting the form and the language of the topographical poem makes a "transitive beginning," to use Edward Said's term (50). That is, Abram's Plains is the record of the transitional moment at which New France became the Province of Quebec. The poem thus reflects not just a jingoist celebration of the British victory, but, also, a mercantilist's emergent vision of a new country. In this regard, Said's "transitive" becomes a metaphoric description of the way in which the poem functions as a rather lengthy verbal construction that takes a host of direct objects from the environs of Quebec and marshals them into the territorial equivalent of a grammatical unit. Although the "real scenes of nature" that comprise this entity do not correspond directly to the language that represents them, the scenes cohere by virtue of Cary's use of the bird's eye view and the transitive power of language to relate one thing to another (Cary 1). At another level, "transitive" mobilizes a cognate term—the surveyor's device, the transit. Conceived of transitively, Cary's poem displays the language of a topographer because it takes the measure of the region about him. This survey compresses time and space by making the past and present justify the emergence of a new order, a Canada before the name possessed any official sanction. In this respect, here at the end of the discussion, Cary's poem must be regarded as a manifestation of Canada's beginning. However, that beginning must be viewed strictly in Said's terms, as a "transitive beginning" (51). As Said says, this kind of beginning is "always hungering . . . for an object it can never fully catch up with in either space or time" (73), but it is especially suited for "work, for polemic, for discovery" (76). The heuristic quality of the transitive beginning is apposite to a poem such as Abram's Plains because it invites an understanding of the *graph* in topographical that is oriented to process, to beginning not with a definite end in mind, but with at least an "expected continuity" (Said 72). It is to the matter of the continuity in Canadian poetry of place that this discussion now turns by examining Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue."

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[126] Glickman argues that Cary may have been motivated by "the Virgilian mock-heroic" in his presentation of fire-flies as miniature Caesars (505). She holds that, being intoxicated "with power," the insects serve to underline what she calls the "anti-war theme of Abram's Plains" (505). It must be remembered, however, that Cary, like Virgil, enjoyed the luxury of writing under the aegis of a strong imperial power: both poets honour war, its heroes, and their strategies because victory promises plenty.

CHAPTER THREE: PART TWO

> The topographical was a cool genre which gradually became warmer . . . (Aubin 66)

> I wear geography next to my skin (Kroetsch, Lovely Treachery of Words ix)[127]

In the paper he presented at the Long Liners Conference of 1984, Russell Brown argues that the contemporary long poem possesses implicit connections to and continuities with earlier Canadian poems that are "both long and concerned with place" ("On Not Saying" 257). To substantiate his point, Brown names Oliver Goldsmith, Joseph Howe, Alexander McLachlan, Bliss Carman, Archibald Lampman, and E.J. Pratt as writers of "poems of place" (257). Brown's remark recalls chapter one of this study, which argues that contemporary critics of long poems in Canada consistently detect the treatment of "place" in these poems without making the more specific generical identification that the adjective *topographical* offers. Yet, when Brown names poets such as Goldsmith, Howe, and McLachlan he respectively refers to The Rising Village (1825), Acadia (1832-33), and The Emigrant (1861), poems that are topographical, not merely "concerned with place." Thus, Brown effectively overlooks an opportunity to undertake a generical inquiry that would more effectively link older and newer poems on the bases of landscape description, referentiality, and history—the full complexities of the topographical genre. To undertake the kind of work that Brown does not is the task of the ensuing argument, that is, to connect "Seed Catalogue" to Abram's Plains by means of a topographical reading strategy.

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[127] Hereafter referred to as LTW.

To read Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue" topographically and alongside Cary's Abram's Plains underscores the fact that both of these poems advance by describing landscape, relating incidents, and recounting history. Much like Cary, Kroetsch, moreover, mobilizes a myth of northern hardiness by presenting a unique correlative—brome grass—for the western Canadian poet. In its depictions of landscape and local environment "Seed Catalogue" admittedly differs from Abram's Plains, for Kroetsch builds "Seed Catalogue" partly around a poetics of absence and partly around a "terrible symmetry" based on the "January snow" and the "summer sun" (11).[128] Uncannily, this focus on privation and seasonal contrast recalls Aikin's eighteenth-century enjoinder to render Canada "exotic" (148) by depicting climatic extremes, a mode of representation that Cary seemingly shunned because he aimed to bolster local pride and commerce in the province of Quebec. Despite this difference in approach, the final effect of Kroetsch's stark depiction of the "home place" in "Seed Catalogue" varies little, if at all, from Cary's, for it differentiates the rural prairie locale and experience from other parts of Canada and from other places of putatively higher cultural standing. Where Cary sincerely displays his local pride in Quebec's abundant resources, Kroetsch ironically manifests his by showing that any want of high culture and salubrious climate only ensures the hardiness of seeds, poets, gardens, and people that define his version of Alberta, specifically in its prairie and parkland zones.

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[128] Because the poem "Seed Catalogue" appears in the volume of collected poems called Seed Catalogue (1977), the relationship between the poem and the book can become confusing. All references to the poem itself place its title between quotation marks. As noted earlier in this

Kroetsch also ironically sketches what Aubin calls "sons of [the] region" (7) through the device of incidental meditation. In this vein, he creates a number of tableaux involving characters—such as the "Strauss boy" whose heroic status is measured by his ability to "piss higher on a barn

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dissertation (190 n90) all quotations from "Seed Catalogue" come from the 1977 edition, and page numbers only are given to locate citations.

wall than any of us" (25) and "Pete Knight – of Crossfield, / Alberta. Bronc-Busting Champion / of the World" (39)—who reinforce the distinctive western Canadian identity that "Seed Catalogue" cultivates.

These characters differ from those in Abram's Plains only because Kroetsch chooses irony where Cary strikes a higher tone for depicting the qualities of his Quebec's inhabitants:

> Fearless, amidst the fragments, as they flow,
> The skilful peasant guides his long canoe.
> The trav'ller dauntless the snows depths disdains,
> He stalks secure o'er hills, o'er vales and plains;
> On the spread racket, whilst he safely strides,
> Tales of Europeans lost in snow derides.
> Here, (blush ye London fops embox'd in chair,
> Who fear, tho' mild your clime, to face the air)
> Scorning to shrink at every breeze that blows,
> Unaw'd, the fair brave frosts and driving snows.
> (558-67)

Both poets, then, staff their poems with appropriate regional representatives; moreover, both poets keep these minor figures at the edges of their respective poems, yet both poets place a key figure at the centre.

In a fashion that brings to mind Cary's use of Wolfe, Kroetsch finds in his mother a heroine who ennobles his poem. Her garden also forms the site from which "Seed Catalogue" draws much of its moral, ideological, and aesthetic design. More on these points will follow, but it suffices for now to say that the poet in "Seed Catalogue" finds his voice because his mother inspires him during her life. In turn, her death, which prompts the poet to recover her loss by enshrining her in memory and verse, creates the tone of loneliness that pervades the poem.

In its focus on local landscape and history, particularly the way in which it deploys a myth of northern hardihood and eulogizes a heroine, "Seed Catalogue" defines itself not only as a topographical poem but also as an especially unsystematic poem, one much like Whyte's or Cary's because it lacks the order which narrative lends a text. To examine "Seed Catalogue" effectively, a plan of discussion becomes a very necessary aid. This need for organization becomes more pressing in light of the way that Kroetsch doubles the textual register of "Seed Catalogue" by printing the first edition of 1977 on top of screened images and found prose from several A.E. McKenzie seed catalogues. The poem's title thus refers to the *objet* *trouvé* that appears beneath and within the lines of "Seed Catalogue." In the edition of the poem published in 1977, the trim size of the volume of poems also entitled Seed Catalogue exactly matches the physical dimensions of the seed catalogues published between 1915 and 1925.[129] This dimensional correspondence aids in integrating the found elements with Kroetsch's verse because the pages reproduced from the trade catalogues form a significant intertext, not just a backdrop for the poem "Seed Catalogue."[130] That is, both the recto and verso pages of the poem carry the screened images and text from the McKenzie trade catalogue, but only the recto pages have Kroetsch's poem printed on them. The recto pages, therefore, are palimpsests, and the verso pages are representative pages from several A.E. McKenzie seed catalogues; albeit, these pages were selected with considerable care to ensure that they thematically anchor Kroetsch's verse on the facing page. The overall design of the first issue thematizes the idea that two texts comprise the poem, for the trade catalogue elements, though they are only faintly screened in a subtle brown colour, suggestive of soil, are legible. Moreover, Kroetsch's verse appears in green type on a "Byronic Blue Brocade" paper suggesting that each grapheme be conceived of as a plant, silhouetted against prairie sky, shooting out of soil (*Seed Catalogue* 75).

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[129] Kroetsch says "Seed Catalogue" was written because he found a "1917" McKenzie's seed catalogue during a visit to the Glenbow Archives ("On Being" 76). The note from Turnstone Press in the first edition points out that two different issues were used for the screens, one from 1916 and one from 1922 (Seed Catalogue 75). Kroetsch's visit to the Glenbow would have occurred in the 1970s, so it is possible that the issue he consulted is now missing, but, at present, the Glenbow holds McKenzie's catalogues from 1910, 1914, 1915, and 1925. The catalogue consulted for this reading of "Seed Catalogue" is the issue from 1915; it repeats verbatim the product descriptions that can be made out in the first edition screens and in the found prose elements on the recto pages.

[130] In this regard "Seed Catalogue" must be viewed as a found poem that displays Kroetsch's modernist sensibilities in its resemblance to Ezra Pound's Cantos (1934, 1937, 1940, 1948), William Carlos Williams' Paterson (1946), and Charles Olson's Maximus Poems (1960).

Unfortunately, subsequent re-issues of "Seed Catalogue," like the one in *Completed Field Notes* (McClelland and Stewart 1989), lack the design features present in the volume where the poem was first printed.[131] Although the found prose from the trade catalogues survives in subsequent printings of the poem, the absence of screens on both recto and verso pages so diminishes the intertextuality of "Seed Catalogue" as to render it a lesser, very different poem. Shirley Neuman's description of Kroetsch's "particular" use of intertext—"the space shared by, the relations between, different texts," as a technique that makes "Seed Catalogue" work by "responding to and resisting" the artifact named in its title—shows just how vital is the interplay between not only the versos and rectos but also the foreground and background of the first edition ("Allow Self" 115). In this case, form and content cannot be divorced from one another, for the artifact becomes a seedbed that gives an organic kind of unity to the poem in which Kroetsch's own verse roots itself and then grows not so much into a garden as into a landscape.

To use *landscape* and *seedbed* as appositives for the A.E. McKenzie catalogues is no attempt to create a frivolous conceit from the horticultural theme of "Seed Catalogue." Rather, the ease with which it is possible to conceive of the trade catalogues as a seedbed and landscape external to the poem, but also shaped by the poem into an indivisible part of it, recalls the way that the first chapter of the present study argued that linguistic reference to what lies outside language, especially in the topographical tradition, creates a reciprocating, that is, an informing and sustaining relation between figure and ground.

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[131] Hereafter referred to as CFN.

The double nature of the text in "Seed Catalogue" indicates that the poem has at least two audiences: one academic, one popular. Kroetsch addresses his popular audience by recovering portions of the A.E. McKenzie seed catalogues and also by recounting parts of the Kroetsch family history that are so integral to the history of Heisler, Alberta. In this regard, "Seed Catalogue" becomes a fit companion piece to a local history like Wagon Trails in the Sod: A History of the Heisler Area (1982), for both texts pay homage to a community of readers who were seed catalogue customers, that is, gardeners, farmers, harvesters, settlers, land owners—shapers of topography. A more bookish audience is addressed by the poem's poetic intertextuality, especially in its echoing of American modernist writers already mentioned: Pound, Williams, and Olson. A posse of Kroetsch's friends such as Rudy Wiebe, Al Purdy, and Jim Bacque bridges the popular and academic audiences. The very presence of these friends suggests that in their number and kindred spirits Kroetsch finds strength to embolden the didactic function of "Seed Catalogue" (appropriate for a topographical poem) that aims at teaching academic readers the virtues of knowing and celebrating the overlooked places, stories, and histories of Alberta. Some sense of this aim appears in the introduction Kroetsch wrote for Wagon Trails in the Sod:

> Heisler is a magic place for those of us who lived there in the past; for those living in Heisler now it is a place where history is still being made. The ongoing present is made vital and alive by our ability to honor our ancestors. We must feel a local pride. And one of the ways in which we come to a local pride is through our knowledge of local history. ("Rubberneck" v)

This emphasis on the local and Kroetsch's place in it helps explain the strong autobiographical element of "Seed Catalogue," for the poem is partly about the formation of its "poet" and partly about Robert Kroetsch in all the local places of the poem:

> wedding dance, a grain elevator, the cars lined up behind the wire at a ballgame, a sausage supper, the tables in the hotel, the old pool hall, the stores on main street, the post office, the skating rink shack, the circle of players at a card game, the gatherings after a funeral.
>
> ("Rubberneck" v)

In the ensuing argument "Seed Catalogue" will be treated as a topographical poem, but the discussion will be governed by the fact that Kroetsch's nearly obsessive exploration and explanation of the poet's growth in the various locations of the poem gives so much autobiographical force to the text as to prompt consideration of it as a *Künstlerroman* in verse. Notwithstanding this qualification, "Seed Catalogue" remains a topographical poem because the way in which it depicts the formation of its poet depends upon a formula that defines identity by reference to place.

To advance this understanding of the poem, a section of the ensuing argument will deal with the autobiographical paradigm that obtains in "Seed Catalogue." Following logically from discussion of autobiography comes an examination of the role Kroetsch plays as public persona, writer, and academic in modulating, indeed, almost muzzling, critics who have offered readings of "Seed Catalogue." Five divisions of argument, which discuss the poem's ten sections, then follow: the first examines the poet's voice in relation to the location of the "home place," that is, the Kroetsch family's home quarter section, which section one of the poem describes; the second division gathers together sections two, three, four, and five of the poem to study the role of the poet's father and the absences by which Kroetsch defines central Alberta; the third division examines sections six, seven, eight, and nine, but emphasis falls on sections six and seven, for these two parts of the poem most clearly speak to the imbrication of the poet's identity and his locale; the fourth division focuses on the poem's tenth section, the one that creates a rough frame structure by returning to the topic of the poet's mother. The fifth and last division closes this study by briefly addressing the fact that "Seed Catalogue" is also a form of apologia, one that could be written without the circumlocution of the poem. By way of summary, the closing paragraphs of the fifth and final division also compare and contrast the ways in which Cary and Kroetsch effect the work of the topographical poem by employing different versions of the myth of northern hardihood.

Autobiography

Unlike Whyte's *Homage*, a poem that bears very close thematic resemblance to "Seed Catalogue," the latter constellates its question of identity around the formation of "*a poet*," not an archetypal Canadian. "Seed Catalogue" is comparatively personal; in fact, Kroetsch invests so much first-person energy into answering the poem's question—"*How do you grow a poet?*"—that it is impossible to ignore the role of autobiography in "Seed Catalogue." While it is not the purpose of this study to shift its focus from poetry about place to poetry about the self (as if from Pope to Wordsworth), two aspects of Kroetsch's use of "I" merit discussion. First, as Neuman points out, "where contemporary criticism emphasizes the attempt to escape the alienation of the Self's loss in the Other or loss of the Other, Kroetsch feels the need to escape the solipsistic I" (107). A paradoxical impetus thus underlies the many uses of "I" in "Seed Catalogue" because they do not necessarily secure the poet's identity; rather, they free the speaker from some of the self-conscious provincialism that accrues to "the poet" from Heisler, Alberta. Evidence of Kroetsch's release from the "I" is found in section five of the poem, where the poet recites the refrain of Ervin Rouse's "Orange Blossom Special"—"I don't give a damn if I do die do die do die do die do die . . ."—but he does so in apposition with his failure "to deliver real words / to real people" (27). In this recontextualization, all the rambling joy of the original fiddle tune is lost, but through it the poet gains freedom from the gravity of his failed efforts at poetry and in defining himself as a writer.

The second autobiographical distinction of "Seed Catalogue" centres on Kroetsch's refusal to adhere strictly to the generical convention that makes a mature narrator reminisce, judge, and interpret his younger self (Neuman, "Allow Self" 115). Neuman perceptively describes Kroetsch's alternative to conventional "diachronic doubleness":

> [t]he mechanism of the . . . [poem] is to create two Is, the voice in the poem, and a second over-voice which goes on at the same time, eliding the gap between past and present. ("Allow Self" 114-15)

The "I," the Kroetsch who is the poet in formation and the controlling voice of the entire poem, can be heard in the two voices of section three:

> Germaine and I were like/one
> we had discovered, don't ask me
> how, where — but when the priest said
> *playing dirty* we knew — well —
>
> . . . .
>
> *But how —*
> Adam and Eve and Pinch-Me
> went down to the river to swim —
> Adam and Eve got drownded.
> *But how do you grow a lover?* (21)

The "over-voice" in the italicized question interrupts the remembered incident here (and in many other places), but the intrusion never impedes the earlier reminiscence from unfolding. As Neuman puts it, "by synchronizing his two voices, his autobiography ceases to be an act of memory and becomes an act of speech, becomes an act of continuing self-enunciation" ("Allow Self" 115). The "I" created thus concurrently serves as the poem's speaker, the poet remembered, and Kroetsch at various stages of his life, while the second "I" becomes Kroetsch as contemporary author, friend, acquaintance, and fixture of Canadian letters and academe. From a practical perspective, such concurrence in the poem's "I" creates slippage in the conventions of distinguishing among the poem's author, its speaker, and its subject. Because Kroetsch so clearly aims to overlap (or ignore) distinctions between remembered self, writing self, and private self, the present study uses *Kroetsch*, *the poet*, and *the speaker* interchangeably to refer to the poem's author and subject.

The continuing self-enunciation identified by Neuman helps to explain the diversity of the poem's time frame because her argument demands a synchronous, not diachronic, temporal aspect. Even though Neuman accounts satisfactorily for the simultaneous presence of at least two "Is," her observations restrict themselves primarily to the autobiographical elements of "Seed Catalogue." Because the poem is much more than autobiography, it is also possible to explain its synchronous figuration of time by noting that Williams' Paterson (1946), which blends local history and identity with liquid synchronicity, exerts a powerful influence on Kroetsch. The debt that Kroetsch acknowledges to Paterson also serves to remind readers of "Seed Catalogue" that, for all its humour, the poem is Modernist in the sense that it possesses an earnest social commitment to local pride, history, and identity. In this regard, "Seed Catalogue" aligns itself with the greater tradition of topographical poetry, so it is worthwhile recalling the argument of Foster, who argues that the topographical poet uses certain temporal registers to demonstrate the historical necessity of his vision. According to Foster, the topographical poet may be "looking and writing" in the present, reflecting on the historical past, using a mythological past for purposes of comparison and explanation of origins, and also as projecting into the future (399). Kroetsch simultaneously uses each of these time frames in "Seed Catalogue," but he subtly manipulates them to reveal and conceal the historical and social necessity of his vision. This process is nowhere more evident than in the series of questions "Seed Catalogue" addresses to its reader: "*how do you grow . . . a gardener . . . a lover . . . a prairie town . . . a past . . . a poet . . . a garden?*" (15-47). While it is true that these questions give topographical force to the poem by focusing on place, time, language, and identity, they have an additional role that merits immediate discussion.

By means of these questions Kroetsch directly addresses the reader to achieve at least two distinct effects; both have important consequences for any critical reading of "Seed Catalogue." First, Kroetsch's direct address interpellates its audience. When the poet says "*you*" he hails the reader and invites or co-opts him to become a fellow problem solver, instead of a passive member of an audience. In effect, a species of writerly delegation occurs with the imperative that the reader take up the poem's riddling. Second, as the reader accepts the challenge of finding answers to the poem's questions, a kind of amicable contract grows between the text and its critic. This second effect helps explain, at least partly, the tenor of most criticism attending "Seed Catalogue."

Few critics of "Seed Catalogue" find any ideological texture in the poem. The heuristic quality of the poem conceals its work from most critics, who consistently find "Seed Catalogue" a seemingly innocent, even original, text. It must be remembered that the poem possesses an altogether disarming candour in its unaffected address to the reader and in its many admissions of incompetence, as seen particularly in the poet's fall from the horse which "was standing still" (11). Moreover, the vulnerability that the poem images in adolescent love and lost innocence adds to the genuineness of emotion that leaks out proudly but endearingly in its beery moments of drinking with Al Purdy (35) or in the drunken, transient miscommunication with "some woman" at the Toronto airport (39). Many elements—the airport tableau, the brief sketch on the "stations of the way: / the other garden" arising from meditation on Hiroshige's prints, the fabric of wistful remembrance surrounding the poet's home place, and the tender recollection of his mother's voice—all these work together to create a readerly empathy for his homesickness (37). Kroetsch also insists that his reader become a personal acquaintance who shares in private anecdotes involving family and friends like James Bacque and Rudy Wiebe. Much conspires to discourage a dispassionate and critical reading of "Seed Catalogue," especially one that looks for what the poem conceals and does not remain content with accepting the poem's invitation to enter into a relationship or conspiracy with its poet, who is charmingly familiar with his reader and with many of his critical and creative colleagues.

The current study aims to address this situation not by any form of *ad hominen* attack on Kroetsch; rather, by employing a generical approach the ensuing argument emphasizes a topographical response to the poem and its questions. Autobiographical matters pertain to this approach but they do so in relation to place. By making the autobiographical serve the topographical, this reading of "Seed Catalogue" will work with the poem's fabric of history, place, and language to show how it shapes an ideologically charged landscape. This last point suggests that "Seed Catalogue" will be treated as a regional poem, that is, as an important type of the topographical genre.

Viewing "Seed Catalogue" as a regional poem gathers together each of its questions, for when Kroetsch asks after gardeners, lovers, prairie towns, the past, poets, and gardens he does so with an implied particularity that if articulated plainly would rephrase its question to something like "how do you grow a poet *in Heisler*?"—in a place seemingly possessing no culture, no lover's inspiration, no cities, no history, and no other poets. Although this observation states what is utterly plain, it shows the common sense and, more importantly, the common speech and common place that contemporary criticism all too frequently omits from its considerations of "Seed Catalogue." If a topographical reading of "Seed Catalogue" is one that involves common sense, then a very important clarification must be made now. Although "Seed Catalogue" is a prairie poem, Heisler and its immediate Battle River environs are neither short nor long grass prairie nor boreal forest; rather, Heisler is located in Alberta's aspen parkland. This area belongs to Alberta's central parkland sub-region, which reaches in a wide arc from Airdrie in the South to a point north of Edmonton and east to Lloydminster and Provost. Sandwiched between the boreal forest of the North and the grasslands of the South, the central parkland is the most densely populated region of Alberta. The fertile, loamy black soils, the comparatively long growing season (some ninety-five frost-free days) and warm summers (mean temperature of fifteen degrees Celsius) explain its attraction. Later in this discussion, where the seventh section of "Seed Catalogue" is examined, the discrepancy between the poem's description of this bio-region's "terrible symmetry" of "January snow" and "summer sun" (11) and its actual richness in season, soil, and biota will be treated.[132]

For the present, it is crucial to note that emphasis on the quotidian aspect of "Seed Catalogue" disables its animating riddle—"*how do you grow a poet?*"—through an appropriately blunt answer: plant him; ground him. With this answer in mind, one can see that "Seed Catalogue" remains a poem about language, identity, place, and history, but it all the more powerfully possesses the qualities of a verse *Künstlerroman* that cannot realize the poet's formation without a defining place.

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[132] In her "Biocritical Essay" Aritha van Herk distinguishes herself by using "parkland" in her discussion of Kroetsch's locale, perhaps because she was raised in nearby Edberg, on the south bank of Battle River Valley (5-6).

Kroetsch's understanding of himself harmonizes well with this perspective, for he speaks in terms that are environmentally deterministic when he says "I grew up with a very powerful sense that self was physical place" (Gunnars 59). The homology that Kroetsch creates between place and self, especially the writing self, has singular bearing on a topographical understanding of not only "Seed Catalogue" but also most of his creative *oeuvre* because it creates an interpretive foundation. This need is paramount for the work of Kroetsch because it is more routinely celebrated for its deconstructive and postmodern complexity than is that of other Canadian writers (Godard 19-20). These critical accolades, however, typically overlook the gravity of artistic purpose that Kroetsch commits to when he says "I guess I'm high modern, after all, in that I take the role of the artist seriously" (Enright and Cooley 28).

Kroetsch's sincerity of purpose encompasses and allows for the commitment he shows to creating himself as an Albertan writer. By equating identity and place, Kroetsch uses terms that are effectively equivalent to Miller's figure-and-ground paradigm outlined in chapter one of this study. Miller speaks of the reversible set of relations whereby

> if the landscape is not prior to the novel and outside it, then it cannot be an extratextual ground giving the novel referential reality. If it is not part of the novel, in some way inside it as well as outside, then it is irrelevant to it. But if the landscape is inside the novel, then it is determined by it and so cannot constitute its ground. (21)

This equivalence between place and writing applies to place and writer because of Miller's "alogic" of sequence whereby any link between identity (the poet) and place "presupposes" the other "as its determining" cause, "but in its turn is cause of the other" (20-21). If this argument is translated into terms relevant to Kroetsch, Alberta generally defines him, but Heisler more specifically defines him. As a writer, Kroetsch generally defines Alberta (through his novels, his poetry, and his travel book Alberta [1968]), but more specifically "Seed Catalogue" defines Heisler. According to Miller, this relation of "causer and caused, first and second" changes places in a "reversing" fashion (21). This study, it will be recalled, substitutes a reciprocal formation for Miller's reversible one in order to capture the informing and sustaining relationship between landscape and landscape writing. The same reciprocating relation obtains between Kroetsch as poet and the home place of "Seed Catalogue," especially with respect to the question, "*how do you grow a poet?*" and the answer offered here: plant him (29).

The equation of poet and place, which Kroetsch quite willingly performs, highlights the role of language in "Seed Catalogue," in particular with respect to the home place. The poem's representation of the Kroetsch family's quarter section is partially mimetic and partially constitutive, so care must be taken not to run too far with the deconstructive approaches that Kroetsch seems to invite because of his evolving interest in poststructuralist poetics. Where Kroetsch works to define Heisler by absences in section four of the poem, he fortuitously permits readings that adapt readily to criticism built on Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence, but this is not to say that Kroetsch was a thoroughgoing deconstructionist in

1977 when he wrote "Seed Catalogue."[133]

This historical reminder underscores the importance of using the 1977 edition of the poem when reading "Seed Catalogue" critically, for this version has the green typeface and palimpsest of the McKenzie seed catalogues.[134] These two textual features constitute part of the poem's locality, a topic which will be elaborated below. By working with the first edition, I also underline the fact that the poem was published in the 1970s, at a time not only when Kroetsch had just begun writing long poems but also when his poetry stood very much under the influence of the American modernist tradition, especially the work of William Carlos Williams and Charles Olson, and when the dominant theoretical tradition acting on Kroetsch was phenomenology.

This attention to historical specificity brackets

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[133] Any text may, of course, be analyzed by virtually any theoretical framework, but the comparatively early date of publication for "Seed Catalogue" makes it very difficult to give full credence to evaluations of the poem that view it through the poetics of Kroetsch's later theoretical and critical essays.

[134] The version of "Seed Catalogue" in CFN (1989) has one substantive variant that distinguishes it from other printings of the poem. Section three of the version in CFN reads, "*Love / is a break in the warm flesh*" (36), whereas the first edition reads "*Love / is a beak in the warm flesh*" (19). The Long Poem Anthology (1979), edited by Michael Ondaatje, and a/long prairie lines (1989), edited

Kroetsch's later poetics and so renders "Seed Catalogue" innocent of later aesthetic and intellectual developments, that is, ones associated particularly with deconstruction. Read as a poem produced in the 1970s, "Seed Catalogue" remains a remarkable text, rather more complex and substantial than deconstructive tactics may apprehend, particularly because it becomes motivated more by a local, rather immovable poetics and less by a set of drifting poetics—those of erasure—that only emerged later for Kroetsch and his literary critical contemporaries.

The plan of the ensuing discussion works with the elements of the topographical genre—language, landscape, history, as well as the identity of the poet—but does so in order to address the riddles that give shape to "Seed Catalogue." In every section that follows, the goal of the discussion lies with making clear the way in which Kroetsch differentiates his landscape and then ties the formation of the poet's identity to that landscape. This understanding connects, in fact makes equal, landscape and identity. "Seed Catalogue," therefore, performs the work of the topographical poem; it differentiates the landscape, that is, the region of Alberta, from the rest of Canada, and from the Europe that was the ancestral home of the Kroetsch

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by Daniel Lenoski, both use "*beak,*" not "*break.*"

family. Although there are metonymic gestures that suggest that the larger region of the prairie west forms part of the poem's reference, "Seed Catalogue" lacks the scope and unity of Abram's Plains. This lack of scope arises out of Kroetsch's parkland location. From the low prospect of his having lost his seat on the horse that was "standing still" Kroetsch's vision cannot find the western equivalent of the St. Lawrence. Although Kroetsch could have, arguably, availed himself of the North Saskatchewan River (and its tributaries, the Clearwater and Brazeau rivers) and reached continentally through it to the South Saskatchewan River (and its tributaries, the Bow, the Kananaskis, the Elbow, the Highwood, Oldman, and Waterton rivers), "Seed Catalogue" is no river poem. His catalogue of riparian privation shows that his focus is on the ground of the home place:

> the absence of the Seine, the Rhine, the Danube,
> the Tiber
> and the Thames. Shit, the Battle River ran
> dry one fall. The Strauss boy could piss
> across it. (25)

Although one must speculate on the reasons why Kroetsch omitted the rivers of Alberta from "Seed Catalogue" their absence intensifies his ironic tone (as in the passage quoted) and strengthens his poetics of absence and makes all the more problematic his search to define himself as "*a poet*" (29). The poet's identity in relation to place, because it is problematic, unfolds with considerable subtlety especially with regard to matters of voice. Kroetsch, moreover, displays a certain ambivalence about voice, particularly about capturing it in writing, for he says the "manifestation of the voice is oral because that's the only language we recognize" as "ours," as Canadian (Enright and Cooley 26). The emphasis Kroetsch lays on vernacular in "Seed Catalogue" arises from his understanding of the prairies as more of an oral culture than a written one.

I

From the intertextual play between the McKenzie seed catalogue and Kroetsch's verse, there arises the distinctive voice that secures the poem's locality, and, therefore, begins the work of differentiation and identity formation for the poet. The first words, however, are not Kroetsch's, for the poem begins with the seed catalogue's description of "**Copenhagen Market Cabbage**" (11). The exuberant language describing this vegetable—"a **cabbage** of the **highest pedigree**" which is "**creating considerable flurry** among **professional gardeners** all **over the world**"—

gives Kroetsch a point from which to set the dry, factual tone that his first words strike: "We took the storm windows / off / the south side of the house / and put them on the hotbed" (11). By recalling this moment Kroetsch reorients his audience and so invites his reader to apprehend the poem and its ground through the aperture of the windows and thus to privilege the home site. The difference in tone and perspective works also to highlight the fact that although the seed catalogue's words often complement Kroetsch's, in this case the poem resists the meaningless and placeless language—"all **over the world**"—of marketing and promotion that fills the catalogue's description of cabbage by emphasizing what is local, centred around "the house" and its garden (11).

Kroetsch's poetry, however, does not efface the prose description of the "**Copenhagen Market Cabbage**" (11). By selecting this vegetable, Kroetsch immediately signals that "Seed Catalogue" will create a tension between two places: between the New World of the home place near Heisler and his family's ancestral, Old World home of Germany. Copenhagen is, of course, not in Germany, but in as much as the vegetable symbolizes the presence of European stock it brings to the poem the paradigmatic matters of Canadian multiculturalism and its attendant questions of importation and adaptation, figured, in this case, through horticultural hybridization and acclimatization. This reality shows that "Seed Catalogue" cannot be conceived of as a poem about origins, for that vein of inquiry is made moot by the ethnic and immigrant symbol of the "**Copenhagen Market Cabbage**." The poem, then, worries not about the source, the "seed" or kernel of originary stuff with respect to the "*poet*," but, by inquiring into how a poet is grown, about the cause of the poet's maturity, and, therefore, his authority to speak. Resisting and finding voice thus becomes all the more an issue of concern for the poet; attendant on this emphasis on poetic voice is the poet's mission of achieving "song" not "story," a tension which emerges particularly in sections six and seven.

In her interview with Kroetsch, Kristjana Gunnars shows sensitivity to this poetic dimension of "Seed Catalogue" by repeatedly calling the sections that comprise the poem "lyrics" (59). "Seed Catalogue" does have its moments of lyricism, deeply so in sections one and ten, but Gunnars' use of the term calls to mind vigour more than condensed, personal, intense feeling or musicality. The poem possesses a more diffuse medley of lyrics, for the prose catalogue descriptions and testimonials become part of its overall texture, and part of Kroetsch's authority as an Albertan poet.

The stark contrast between "all **over the world**" and the small "hotbed," that is, between the found elements of the seed catalogue and Kroetsch's verse, engenders considerable debate over what theoretical model, either a dialectical or a dialogical one, best describes "Seed Catalogue."[135] Neither a dialectical nor a dialogical model fully allows that the catalogue is also the landscape of the poem, its terrain, for it is not only a document but also a *topos*—the site upon which the poem is inscribed. This understanding is possible because the word *catalogue*, particularly in reference to trade catalogues, such as those produced by A.E. McKenzie, has undergone a semantic shift. The earlier Greek sense of the term (from katalegein or καταλέγειν, to choose, pick out, enlist, enrol) is archaic. A catalogue is now usually distinguished from its older sense, "a mere list or enumeration by systematic or methodical arrangement, alphabetical or other order," by "the addition of brief particulars, descriptive, or aiding identification, indicative of locality, position" (OED). Through this understanding, the A.E. McKenzie entries—which are so highly "indicative of locality, position"—"Seed Catalogue" discursively collocate the history and place of Alberta and the wider prairie west. In this regard, Kroetsch concretizes one of his literary influences, for by reproducing pages of the seed catalogue in the 1977 edition of his poem, he displays a foundational element in the "primal scene" of composing his version of Albertan poetry (Bentley, Mimic 51).

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[135] In her argument, Kamboureli takes issue with Robert Lecker's discussion of dialectics in Kroetsch's longer poems (Lecker, Robert Kroetsch 123-47). Where Lecker works historically and developmentally, Kamboureli reads theoretically and retrospectively; she dismisses much of Lecker's critical insight because she finds that he views Kroetsch as "a structuralist" ("On the Edge" 113). In place of homogeneity and monologism, Kamboureli finds hetereogeneity and dialogism in Kroetsch's poetry. Although this instance of critics disagreeing is no different from any other interpretive debate, it displays the problems inherent in making analyses of poetry by an individual such as Kroetsch, for he was, in the 1970s very much a structuralist, yet, as Kamboureli notes, his later poems in texts such as Completed Field Notes (1989) do bear on earlier works (113-14).

For all its naïve energy, however, the language of the trade catalogue cannot be discounted, for it exerts a powerful interplay between cliché and sincerity in Kroetsch's poetry. This play emerges in the contrast between the animated description of the "**Copenhagen Market Cabbage**" and the ironic notice that the prairie spring is not truly an event in itself; rather, it is only the absence of winter: "Then it was spring. Or, no: then winter was ending" (11).[136] This tone of flat understatement is Kroetsch's chief method of creating the prairie voice with which he builds his own texture of locality. The voice itself is, initially, seemingly artless, but it dissembles and so becomes the verbal equivalent of the poker face belonging to Kroetsch's "A-1 Hard Northern bullshitters" (25) that camouflages an acute rhetorical moment in the poem. The moment, of course, turns on another bit of prairie drollery; that is, Kroetsch uses understatement obliquely to imbed the irony of his observation when he edits his initial remark—"[t]hen it was spring"—with "[o]r no: then winter was ending" (11). The first remark employs meiosis ("lessening"), that is, an ironical understatement, so the colloquial humour depends on knowing (getting it) the earnestness and significance behind the observation. The first remark, then, is the climatological equivalent of saying that an extraordinarily wealthy man is only "doing alright." Kroetsch's second remark, however, deigns to make obvious what might be missed—the significance of spring—by changing from meiosis to litotes: "Or no: then winter was ending" (11). This shift from understating to affirming seasonal change by the negative of the contrary ("or no:

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[136] Kroetsch's method here recalls Augustine's

winter was ending") makes more obvious the importance of seasonal change, but it also underscores the poet's conviction that seasonal duality defines his environment. The manner in which this humour grows by incremental intensification heightens the reader's sense that he must attend very carefully to the tone of voice throughout the poem.

Through this subtle tone, Kroetsch asks for an initiated reader familiar with the Albertan culture of the poem, a reader able not to choose between meiosis or litotes, but, rather, to recognize intuitively that these two forms are blended into a vernacular humour. Such readerly perceptiveness seems assumed in his direct address—"You've got to understand this"—where Kroetsch partly entreats and partly commands his reader to defuse the touchiness of an embarrassing moment. The self-deprecatory humour that underwrites this blend of tones effectively secures for him a reader who sees no oxymoron in the minimalist hyperbole at work in the dry humour of the flat anecdotal style of the poem and the vernacular of the seed catalogue's descriptions and endorsements. In the terms of topographical poetry, Kroetsch does nothing more here than create the modesty topos that is so common to the

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definition of original sin as metaphysical lack.

genre. However, it must be remembered that Kroetsch lacks the authority of, say, a Cary whose confident voice issues from the certainty of a military conquest. Kroetsch's tone understandably differs from that of Cary's opening lines in which he says ". . . like a steed, unbroken to bit or rein, / Courting fair health, I drive across the plain" (7-8). Although Kroetsch might be credited with a mimetic effect that draws a correspondence between his sparse diction and a perceived emptiness of the prairie, the barrenness evoked by the "terrible symmetry" of environment—"Only the January snow / Only the summer sun"—rings false when applied to the parkland in which the Kroetsch family's home quarter is actually situated (13).

Nevertheless, if Kroetsch's audience may hesitate to accept his stark depiction of central Alberta's seasons, then there can be little doubt that the next element of the modesty topos will be effective in securing readers who will work with him to "understand this" because Kroetsch makes the next leap, bluntly confessing that "I fell off" (11). This reference to his fall from the horse that "was standing still" is laden with significance (11). The spatial rather than figurative and mythological dimension of the fall, however, signifies in the context of the present discussion, for Kroetsch's fall signals another shift in perspective; unlike Cary's elevated viewpoint in Abram's Plains, Kroetsch's outlook in "Seed Catalogue" focuses by looking up to the horizon.

E.D. Blodgett perceptively argues that "it is not possible to speak of Kroetsch's vision without making use of a lexis, drama, chance, death, transience, and almost above, if not embracing, all, horizon" (233). His etymology of horizon, which arises from the Greek verb *horizo*—to divide, border on, affix, take possession of, explain, and define, emphasizes the term's "spatial and figurative possibilities" as well as its potential in explaining "Kroetsch's own preoccupation with binary oppositions, as well as their interchanges and evasions of opposition" (234).

In his treatment of Kroetsch's "vision" Blodgett goes on to expound one of the figurative aspects of horizon by drawing on Edmund Husserl's and Hans-George Gadamer's "celebrated understanding of horizons in time" (234). Blodgett then describes the interchange between Kroetsch and his audience as a temporal event that melds together Bakhtinian and Barthian terms: the carnivalesque erosion of any distinction between actor and audience, and the metamorphosis of the reader into the writer (234).

This erudite analysis, however, leaves untouched the spatial dimension of horizon. Yet, the suggestive "possibilities" of which Blodgett speaks are unquestionably spatial, for Kroetsch falls to the ground of the "home place: N.E. 17-42-16-W4th Meridian" (13). Unseated, but not uprooted, he now gains a fixed place from which not only to view his horizon but also to gain the particular grasp on his surroundings that is requisite to the topographical genre and its task of landscaping. That Kroetsch falls to the ground suits well the need to implant himself, particularly because the poem says that "we were harrowing the garden" (11). This activity simultaneously connotes an unsettling of the soil and a concomitant readying of the soil to receive seed, in this case the germ of a poet: "The hired man laughed: just / about planted the little bugger. / Cover him up and see what grows" (13).

This moment of recall gives way to the notice that "My father didn't laugh" (13). This reaction signals the ambiguity Kroetsch identifies when he notes that as a boy he could not work in the farm buildings with the men because he had allergies, but he "couldn't work in the house either because that was the sphere of female activity" (Labyrinth 21). To resolve this problem he worked in the garden, but he notes that "a garden is ambiguous on a farm" because the pull it created between the masculine and the feminine, between the barn and the house, gave Kroetsch a "strange sense of belonging and not belonging" (Labyrinth 21). With this autobiographical context in place, the flow of the opening lines makes sense because they focus on locating the poet by offering up the precise survey co-ordinates and directions for home:

> the home place: N.E. 17-42-16-W4th Meridian.
> the home place: 1½ miles west of Heisler,
> Alberta, on the correction line road
> and three miles south. (13)

This twofold description of the farm's location amplifies its role in identifying the poet, and in differentiating him not only psychologically but also topographically.

By falling off the horse and, in effect, inscribing his landing point—N.E. 17-42-16-W4th Meridian—as his home land Kroetsch creates an appositive or a correlative for his identity that can be likened to a replacement or an alternative to an official identification such as a birth certificate or a social insurance number. Land, more specifically, location authenticates and authorizes Kroetsch's poetic role; moreover, land becomes seminal for him because it is the ground from which he plucks his more personal correlative—brome grass—to define himself as a prairie poet. In the terms that this study advances, Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue" is a topographical work because it owes its existence to a place, and the poem's various historical meditations, ruminations, and digressions, however playful, remain fastened to the northeast quarter section of the seventeenth section of the forty-second township, in the sixteenth range, along the fourth meridian west of the prime meridian, or longitude one hundred and twelve degrees west of Greenwich.

In light of Kamboureli's assertion—"for Kroetsch specifically, locality lies outside the logocentric tradition"—it is appropriate to note that in Alberta the northeast corner of each section of land has an iron post driven into the ground to facilitate identifiction of the exact location of the quarter sections in relation to the larger survey grid (109). Marked XVII XLII XVI IV, the post on the Kroetsch quarter would be one of ninety others—nearly two hundred pounds of implanted iron—locating each township (Kochanski 47). The survey system of Canada, then, is like language, for both are built on a system of arbitrary constructs, but either system is adequate to the task of referring outside of itself. Thus, it is difficult to find any escape from logocentric language in a poem using the survey system of Canada to allude to that very phallic post which anchors an abstract mathematical formula to the ground by penetrating it.

To emphasize the specific and concrete referentiality of Kroetsch's language and the fixedness of his perspective and place serves further to temper deconstructive approaches to "Seed Catalogue" that view the poem first as "narrative" and then as a "narrative of dislocation" (Kamboureli 113). Even though "Seed Catalogue" contains narrative portions, Kroetsch is not working in a narrative fashion. Notably, he borrows the very idea of a catalogue from Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass (1855-91), as well as Whitman's habitual use of parallel and reiterative free verse structures. Kroetsch also frequently emulates the three-line stanza of Williams, and merges that form with the loose, flexible left margin that Charles Olson practised. The adaptable structure of the poem thus incorporates the found elements of the seed catalogue—testimonials, product lists, illustrations, marketing material—to which Kroetsch adds historical retrospection, landscape description, incidental meditation, double-column formats, lists, and snippets from and allusions to popular rhyme and song to create a text that cannot be regarded simply as narrative.

Kroetsch's own wish to sidestep sequential story in "Seed Catalogue" manifests itself where he attempts to answer his own question, "*But how do you grow a poet*?" (29). One of his tentative responses takes the form of a story, "Once upon a time in the village of Heisler – " (29), but Kroetsch quickly rejects this effort by editing himself: "Hey, wait a minute. / That's a story" (29). The line that follows this rejection repeats the question, "*How do you grow a poet*?" and so signals that no answer can be found in narrative. As the subsequent sections of the poem unfold, Kroetsch builds his answer by repeatedly turning to the prairie landscape to find a way of growing a poet.

These objections to deconstructive approaches to both "Seed Catalogue" and Kroetsch's larger poetic *oeuvre* require some qualification, however, with respect to their historical context. Consider this statement from Kroetsch:

> the problem of the writer of the contemporary long poem is to honour our disbelief in belief—that is, to recognize and explore our distrust of system, of grid, of monisms, of cosmologies perhaps, certainly of inherited story—and at the same time write a long work that has some kind of (under erasure) unity. (109)

This quotation, however, comes from the 1981 essay "For Play and Entrance: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem" and so represents a vocabulary of deconstructionism that only emerged later in Kroetsch's lexicon. Working with a different critical essay, Godard nevertheless makes the same point as she locates Kroetsch's shift from phenomenology to deconstruction when she says "[t]he Derridean vocabulary first surfaces in 'The Exploding Porcupine: Violence of Form in English-Canadian Fiction,'" another essay that was published in 1981 ("Other Fictions" 16). Care, then, must be taken in reading later critical developments back into Kroetsch's earlier works, for such efforts effectively become revisionary exercises.

The earnestness behind Kroetsch's insistent reiteration of his location reveals a strong undercurrent in the poem. In many ways, it reads like a colonial poem. The uncanny similarity between the compositional context of "Seed Catalogue" and that of a colonial topographical long poem reminds some readers of the parallel that exists between the colonial paradigm and the prairie paradigm, for both contexts involve a problematic relationship between the margin and the centre. In this understanding, the colonial poet is defined by a certain doubleness. By extension, Kroetsch is something of a colonial subject because he possesses a doubleness comprised of his remembered prairie roots and his academic, cosmopolitan present. Lecker argues that Kroetsch has a "doubled sense of place and a doubled state of mind." This observation accords well with the way in which "Seed Catalogue" defines self in relation to place and place in relation to self (2).

Once he is grounded, the emphasis that Kroetsch lays on explaining "what happened" becomes central to a topographical reading of "Seed Catalogue," for the answer the poem provides is not strictly one of story. Rather, the poem underscores an unfolding self-consciousness, a double one that acknowledges the odds against becoming a poet under circumstances that are, in effect, diachronically colonial with respect to Canada's past relationship with Britain and to Canada's current relationship with the United States. The poem, of course, does not resolve the problematic of the poet's formation in a tidy way. Rather, as was argued earlier, the self articulated in the poem is the one that undergoes continual enunciation, so the way in which section one arranges death, a graveyard, spring, and the precise location of the Kroetsch farm shows the nexus of the poet's formation.

Spring, however much its arrival may appear anticlimactic, is, thus, the turning moment of the poem's beginning and its ultimate trajectory. Through repetition the seasonal moment is underlined: "winter was ending. /

This is what happened:" (11). In this line, the colon works in concert with Kroetsch's vague pronoun reference to build expectation. In effect, the colon becomes a stitch in the overall fabric of delay that Kroetsch uses to prolong the poem. Although delay is almost always discussed as a kind of dilatory erotic in criticism of Kroetsch's work, here the vague pronoun sharpens the reader's attention to discover to *what* "this" refers. The final verse paragraph of the first section culminates by disclosing "what happened."

The tone shifts, however, from irony to solemnity in the explanation of the events following the death of Kroetsch's mother:

> This is what happened — at my mother's wake. This
> is a fact — the World Series was in progress. The
> Cincinnati Reds were playing the Detroit Tigers.
> It was raining. The road to the graveyard was
> barely
> passable. The horse was standing still. Bring me
> the radish seeds, my mother whispered. (15)

The forceful demonstrative oath, "[t]his is a fact," helps to freeze each remembered and disjointed item into an emblematic clarity that shifts the recollection from a strict chronology to a severe epiphany. By repeating "[t]his is what happened – " but punctuating this parallel or anaphoric structure with an em dash Kroetsch increases the intonational speed of his line to launch himself into recollecting his mother's voice from among the seemingly irrelevant details of her funeral. Although he uses a similar technique elsewhere with a different effect, Kroetsch visually compresses his lines into a paragraph to thicken his language in imitation of the moment's emotion and insight. Grasping after the connection between the garden he shared with his mother, her love for her son, and the poet's quest for his voice, for his muse, Kroetsch shows here one of the poem's brief flashes of poignancy. At this moment, the poem reaches almost into unconsciousness, but it remains all the more forcefully conscious because the poet's mother closes the section with a weighty hush that only can be gained through this second repetition of her utterance: "bring me the radish seeds." Some wrenched sore is certainly present in the notice that the horse is still standing ("standing still") but the poet's mother is not. Mitigating the sudden and unforeseen grief of this section are the interpolated words themselves, for the whisper summoned through memory becomes that of Mnemosyne herself, mother of the muses, who serves now the traditional role of giving the poet his voice.

Kroetsch, his speaker, and the "poet" of "Seed Catalogue" overlap one another very closely at this point in the poem; in fact, they synchronize here. In this first section, the poem anticipates and so belies the search for a muse that occurs later, in section six. By letting his mother speak, Kroetsch foreshortens the poem's preoccupation with the poet's formation and dispenses with the need for a muse because, albeit painfully, she becomes his muse, and, therefore, the substance of his voice as she animates the lyricism of the poem's "over-voice," to use Neuman's term.

To bear out this interpretation, Kroetsch's words from Labyrinths of Voice help explain the influence of his mother on his writing. First, he speaks of how he attempted to cloak her presence:

> I kept the mother figure, especially, very silent at the center of the writing, partly because my own relationship with my mother was so painful, that I've only recently even put it into print at all. And I think part of my move to autobiography was daring to say that my mother died when I was so young and I was very close to her. (22)

Published in 1982, this interview comes five years after the publication of "Seed Catalogue," but its relevance to the poem is clear, for the "mother figure" also opens the poem in section one and closes it with the same words in section ten, so she is at the "centre" of the poem, not "silent," but whispering. The quotation above might seem like one more of the many dubious statements Kroetsch makes in his many interviews, but in Labyrinths, after he says that his own realization of the "erotic relationship to this woman [his mother]" has "shocked" him, he very plainly emphasizes the connection between his mother and his writing:

> I never liked the paternal models . . . . *I'm someone who believes very consciously that the writing energy comes out of a confrontation with the Muse and the Muse takes the form of immortal woman. Often one almost hates a dependence on that. But I really depend on that relationship with a woman for that writing energy.* (23)

In "Seed Catalogue," the "confrontation" with the muse as "immortal woman" occurs in Kroetsch's loss and remembrance of his mother. The emphasis Kroetsch places on "confrontation" with the muse makes it possible to wish that the screened images on the page from which she speaks were fully legible. If they were, on the left facing page of this section under the heading of "Rosy Gem Radish" would be found:

> Quality is an essential feature in any vegetable, but in the radish it is paramount, for unless a radish is absolutely crisp, tender, and mild, it isn't worth "*two whoops and a hurrah.*" (McKenzie's Seeds 29)

In as much as the growth of a poet parallels the growth of a radish, these standards of quality—"crisp, tender, and mild"—likely lie behind the depth of gratitude the poet owes his mother for teaching him to cultivate his art with care.

The significance of the mother's whispered words grows less fanciful in light of the event that Kroetsch relates in another interview where he says his dead father spoke to him while he was travelling:

> this [the trip to Delphi and the fatherly visitation] really happened—when I heard my father's voice. My dead father said to me: 'What are you doing here? Did I teach you nothing?' . . . There are many ways to interpret it, but I immediately made the interpretation that the place you know is that patch of rural Alberta. (Gunnars 60)

Kroetsch includes his father's words in "Delphi

Commentary," and, in resemblance to the situation in "Seed Catalogue," the words—"What are you doing here? / my father said. / Did I teach you nothing" are repeated twice for emphasis (CFN 195). "Delphi Commentary" is, perhaps, even more autobiographical than "Seed Catalogue," so Kroetsch's explanation of his father's words is worth considering for the light it sheds on the earlier poem:

> It was his awkward stating
> (his farmer's patient
> voice)
> of the wind's ecstasy.
> It was the tripod
> raised to the stars. (CFN 195)

In the context of "Delphi Commentary" the "tripod / raised to the stars" evokes ancient Hellenic sacrifice, but in apposition with his father's "patient voice" and "the stars" the tripod suggests also the tools of celestial navigation, and, more evocatively, the longing for home, the homing instinct that fills Kroetsch's writing. "Delphi Commentary" ends shortly after Kroetsch's father speaks. His words—"speaking in the wind" ask "[w]hat are you doing here?"—and so end the Delphic quest Kroetsch undertakes as tourist, poet, and father with his two daughters to the "belly button of the earth" (CFN 188, 196). Having heard his father's question, Kroetsch responds, "We've got to go," but the destination is not Parnassus; rather, it is home. "What happened," then, in the opening section of "Seed Catalogue" is another kind of visitation that serves as an interpretative guide to the remainder of the poem because it adumbrates Kroetsch's personal conviction that "self was physical place" (Gunnars 59).

In the terms of the topographical poem, Kroetsch thus seeks and finds the *genus loci* of the "home place" and its wider regional scope, central Alberta. To accomplish this task, he draws on one of the oldest cultural myths in western society—the garden; by mobilizing this *topos* Kroetsch creates a poem that stands all the more in need of a topographical reading, for the cultural practice of landscape gardening subtends and overlaps the aesthetics and ideologies in topographical poetry.

II

Section two of "Seed Catalogue," by introducing "my father" veers away from the tender tone of section one that is both vulnerable, in its admission of the fall from the horse, and mystical, in its reiteration of the mother's whisper (17). The father's appearance, however, underlines the fact that the garden is an ambiguous place in as much as it is a shared workplace between men and women because this section shows the father attempting to rid the "potato patch" of the badger (17). Although it is tempting to read this portion of "Seed Catalogue" for its suggestive Freudian tensions between father and son, to view the badger as a symbolic representation of the son, van Herk's warning that Kroetsch is a "master of the art of deception" and a "trickster incarnate" serves as a caution against predictable interpretations (1).[137] What can be gleaned from this section lies close to Kroestch's fascination with voice and the way in which his father's story changes through time and repetition. Having actually "shot at the badger" but hit instead "a magpie that was pecking away at a horse turd about fifty feet / beyond and to the right of the spot where the badger had been / standing" (17) the poet's father retells the event later. In this version "he intended to hit the magpie," and he offers an easy explanation—"Magpies . . . are a nuisance"—and commendation—"they're harder to kill than snakes, jumping / around the way they do, nothing but feathers"—that presents a similar rationale for aiming at the badger in the first place—because it was "threatening man and beast with broken limbs" by digging holes (17).

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[137] Kroetsch admits that he is "fleeing" and being influenced by the father figure in his life and his writing

The line that closes this section—"just call me sure-shot"—makes this portion of the poem into something of a parable on the virtues of inaccuracy and of not telling the truth. As a consequence, this section of "Seed Catalogue" adds a traditional answer to the question "*how do you grow a poet?*" because it evokes Sir Philip Sidney's defense of the poet: "he nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth" (qtd. in Adams 168). Formal and historical considerations aside, Kroetsch nevertheless further secures readerly consent in section two. That is, by simultaneously recounting the truth and the fiction of the incident with the badger and the magpie, he submits a contract to his reader that paradoxically asks for empowerment to tell a personal and compelling truth by means of untruth. Kroetsch's reference to his father (as well as to all the other historical events and people mentioned in the poem) invites the reader of "Seed Catalogue" to adopt a certain paradigm for understanding the poem. No special recourse to literary theory is required to understand the paradigm, however, for Kroetsch hints abundantly at his aim in section two by his selection of the historical anecdote. This event becomes a poetic parable on the virtues of misdirection and of having a poor aim.

(Labyrinth 22).

A poet is grown, at least partly, then, by accident, and in the process something as black and white as truth or fact—wryly figured by the magpie—must die (17). In as much as the magpie was "pecking on a horse turd," Kroetsch suggestively puts truth and history into a scavenger's role and gives the last word—a "sure shot"—not to pure invention or fiction, but, rather, to a fictionalized version of the truth. By having his father observe that magpies are "harder to kill than snakes" Kroetsch introduces Eden's serpent, but it is strangely out of place in a homestead located in the temperate aspen parkland of Battle River country, so its appositional force suggests that the magpie must be regarded in terms more symbolic than the rambling incident suggests. Seen in this light, the poet's father contributes significantly to the genesis of a poet because his tall tales and his easy disregard for the truth or for accuracy, even with a shotgun, frees the son as poet from the curse of facts. "Seed Catalogue" is, however, neither the documentary poem that Livesay described nor the poem of recontextualization that Davey refined out of Livesay's terms. Rather, "Seed Catalogue" so consistently and thoroughly refracts incident, description, and identity through the co-ordinates of "N.E. 17-42-16-W4th Meridian" that it remains a topographical poem (13).

Section three follows the Edenic allusions of sections one and two in an associatively appropriate fashion because this portion of the poem does intimate that a certain fall from innocence is a necessary part of the poet's formation. Indeed, given that "Seed Catalogue" functions so much like a *Künstlerroman*, there is almost an obligatory quality to this section's focus on "Germaine and I . . . *playing dirty*" (19). The priest provides catechistic knowledge that the poet and Germaine were engaged in original sin: "– but when the priest said / playing dirty we knew – well – he had named it   had named / our world   out of existence" (21). However, nothing tragic or traumatic attends this knowledge; rather, the section closes out humorously in its mock confession: "We decided we could do it / just one last time" (21). Like much of Kroetsch's writing, however, this section is remarkable not for its obvious comedy, but for what it seems not to say. When the priest " . . . named it

he had named / our world out of existence" (21), what Kroetsch might call 'uncreating' the world of the poet and his lover, the poet gains a broader horizon, one that keeps alive the overall aim of "Seed Catalogue" of calling into existence a " . . . *a gardener . . . a lover . . . a prairie town . . . a past . . . a poet . . . a garden.*" Yet, these very things, especially the garden and the prairie town, suggest one of the problematics of "Seed Catalogue." Namely, the poem deals so frequently with what appears to be natural—the seasons, horticulture, agriculture, young love, as well as the gophers, badgers, and rabbits of the prairies—that it masks the poignancy of the question "*how do you grow a poet*?" because this aim was so uncommon, so unnatural a goal on a homestead in the 1940s in Alberta.

Section four creates a tension between the plenitude of the seed catalogue and the enumeration of absences defining the prairie town and its past. More than any other portion of "Seed Catalogue" this block epitomizes the region poem, particularly that part of the tradition which displays its regional pride ironically.[138] The poet's answer to his own question "How do you grow a prairie town?" forms itself on the gopher's mercurial, even capricious, nature:

> The gopher was the model.

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[138] See Aubin, 132-33. He observes that Irish and "scores of English poems" simultaneously note the absence of high culture in the environs described while they also evince substantial local pride (133).

Stand up straight:
telephone/poles
grain elevators
church steeples.
Vanish, suddenly: the
gopher was the model. (23)

This use of a western Canadian creature as a poetic conceit recalls section two of "Seed Catalogue" and the poet's allegorical use of the badger and magpie. Although these aspects of the poem appear to be environmentally and regionally apposite, they are stock devices in topographical poetry. In this case, however, Kroetsch avoids the minute descriptions of animals that often appear in topographical poetry, especially nineteenth-century British poems (Aubin 220).

Had Kroetsch evinced the naturalist urge that fills many earlier topographical poems he might have noted that the Albertan "gopher" is actually any one of three ground squirrels: Richardson's Ground Squirrel, Franklin's Ground Squirrel, or the Thirteen-Lined Ground Squirrel. Alberta's only gopher, the Pocket Gopher (*Geomys Bursarius*) is popularly called a "mole" and is rarely seen above ground. Because "Seed Catalogue" features so many Latin terms in its display of "vegetable pride," it is worthwhile to note that all of Alberta's ground squirrels are spermatophiles, that is, seed lovers (Aubin 143).[139] This most fortuitous fact suggests another facet of the relationship between small Albertan towns and their native sons—Albertan poets—in search of "*a past*": even the most insignificant seed of material must be treasured.

Kroetsch's treasure, the McKenzie's seed catalogue, appropriately figures greatly in this section of the poem because the screen on the left-facing page beginning section four is a running list in a three-column format that extends onto the right-hand page and thence onto the two additional pages that comprise section four. Although the first edition of "Seed Catalogue" reproduces the same two seed catalogue pages throughout section four, the thematic inference is clear, for these pages, a standard feature in early McKenzie catalogues, provide a complete list of all the vegetable, grass, tree, shrub, and fruit seeds offered by McKenzie's, and show the cost per package, ounce, quarter pound, half pound and full pound. This section, then, positions and so asserts a horticultural cornucopia against the dearth that the poem records:

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[139] Richardson's Ground Squirrel, Franklin's Ground Squirrel and the Thirteen-Lined Ground Squirrel are respectively *Spermophilus Richardsonii*, *Spermophilus Franklinii*, and *Spermophilus Tridecemlineatus* when given their Latin

the absence of silkworms
the absence of clay and wattles (whatever the
hell
they are
the absence of Lord Nelson
the absence of kings and queens
the absence of a bottle opener, and me with a
vicious
attack of the 26-ounce flu
(23)

The list, of course, extends to include Sartre, Heidegger, pyramids, lions, lutes, violas, xylophones, the Parthenon, and much, much more, but the point is clear: Kroetsch is balancing one catalogue, one exercise of creating unity from variety, against another. By representing the entire contents of the seed catalogue in the screen and by cataloguing the touchstones of Western civilization in his own verse Kroetsch manages to pit what amounts to a colony, or at least a frontier, against the perceived core of Western culture without worrying that his own voice will somehow be less than the monuments he lists. The parity that exists between Kroetsch's index of Western civilization and his meagre Albertan culture succeeds

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nomenclature.

because each catalogue functions metonymically, each part suggesting a greater whole. But where Kroetsch allows the European and British items to stand without commentary, he interlards them with incidents, such as an attack of the "26-ounce flu," to create a strong contrast between static history and the vigorous, even virile, life of the prairies:

> the absence of a condom dispenser in the
> Lethbridge Hotel,
> and me about to screw an old Blood whore,
> I was in love
>
> . . . .
>
> the absence of the girl who said that if the
> Edmonton
> Eskimos won the Grey Cup she'd let me kiss
> her nipples in the foyer of the Palliser
> Hotel. I don't know where she got to.
>
> . . . .
>
> *How do you grow a prairie town*?
> Rebuild the hotel when it burns down. Bigger.
> Fill it
> full of a lot of A-1 Hard Northern Bullshitters.
>
> (25)

The incidents recalled in each case imply that a reasonable degree of inebriation lies behind each of the bawdy episodes. Whether such behaviour passes the muster of contemporary standards is of little importance to the context of "Seed Catalogue," for its role in the poem accords well with the tradition of "the glass" in topographical poetry, particularly in the estate and the region poem, the two forms that "Seed Catalogue" most closely resembles (Aubin 205). Indeed, Aubin's description of eighteenth-century region poems—"genre scenes . . . some of the evening with nymphs dancing on the 'plains' and the gentry at their virile entertainment"—might easily be recontextualized to Kroetsch's Alberta with remarkable accuracy. That Aubin's sketch of stock devices can be applied to "Seed Catalogue" proves not so much a continuity or direct influence, but, rather, that as an example of the region poem Kroetsch's text inevitably contains a description of local amusement.

Section five continues the theme of the formation of the poet, but does so by insinuating two different truths about this process. First, when the poet plants "some melons, just to see what would / happen" (27), the experiment fails not so much because the "gophers ate everything" but because Heisler, Alberta is no place to grow the "Musk Melon or Cantaloupe," which is shown in a barely legible screen from the McKenzie catalogue on this page (27). The melon, then, fails in this environment because it is neither native nor a sufficiently hardy exotic. The melon's description—"the species we offer are quick growing, early maturing sorts"—shows that there is no shortcut to maturity for the poet (27). That the growth of the poet is the central question here appears clear because the indented lines "I applied to the Government. / I wanted to become a postman, / to deliver real words / to real people" imply another admission of failure with words (27).

III

In contrast to the failed efforts at growing melons and delivering words described in section five the seed catalogue entry that opens section six—"No. 339 — **McKenzie's Pedigreed Early Snowcap Cauliflower**"—assures gardeners of success:

> 'There is **no place** in the **world** where **better cauliflowers** can be **grown** than right here in the **West**. The **finest specimens** we have **ever seen**, larger and of **better quality**, are **annually grown** here on our **prairies**. Being **particularly** a **high altitude plant** it **thrives** to a **point** of **perfection** here,

> **seldom seen** in **warmer climes**.' (29)

In this passage, Kroetsch interacts directly with the catalogue by asking, "*But how do you grow a poet?*" (29). His adversative—"[*b*]*ut*"—shows that the catalogue entry is somehow an unsatisfactory response, even though it clearly suggests that matching species to their environment ensures their successful, indeed, perfect, growth. Section seven of the poem shows the poet appropriating the seed catalogue description of brome grass in order to answer the same question, but, here, in section six the poet recites what amounts to a trial-and-error record of inappropriate responses to the question.

Tellingly, the absence of memory, not simply the muse, appears to hamper the development of the poet:

> His muse is
> his muse/if
> memory is
> and you have
> no memory then
> no meditation
> no song (shit
> we're up against it) (29)

This bit of reasoning shifts from the connection between the muse and memory to another blind end:

how about that girl
you felt up in the
school barn or that
girl you necked with
out by Hastings' slough

. . . .

. . . or that
girl in the skating
rink shack who had on
so much underwear you
didn't have enough
prick to get past her/
CCM skates (29)

Curiously enough, each of these incidents exist in memory, so the missing memory—"and you have / no memory"—mentioned must refer to another kind of relationship to the muse or to another muse altogether, not the adolescent ones listed. As argued earlier, Kroetsch believes that his "*writing energy comes out of a confrontation with the Muse and the Muse takes the form of immortal woman* (*Labyrinths* 23). The "*confrontation*" Kroetsch mentions is an erotic one, so each of the incidents where Kroetsch remembers "that girl" should qualify. However, in the context of section one, it was argued that Kroetsch's muse is his mother. The absence of one here, in section six, is due to a synchronous time frame of the poem that overlaps past, present, and a variety of developmental stages to create the kind of historic present tense associated with the idiolect that Kroetsch strives to achieve in "Seed Catalogue."

The seventh section marks a new development in the overall structure of the poem because it introduces what must be called multiple-choice answers to the poem's riddles. To the question "*how do you grow / a poet*" section seven suggests three answers: a) drink with Al Purdy at the La Ronde restaurant in Edmonton; b) juxtapose the seed catalogue entry for "Japanese Morning Glory" with Hiroshige's prints to suggest that any feeling of not being at home helps expand and deepen the understanding of home; c) take leave of a friend, Jim Bacque (albeit an "Eastener"), in a drunken but "nice friendly tension" over the heroes and myths of Toronto and Alberta (Brown, "Interview" 7-8). Each of these possibilities contributes something of an answer, but, true to the poem's enigmatic and circumlocutive ways, the more certain solution to the problem lies at the section's head, in the seed catalogue entry for brome grass. The importance of this section demands that the passage be cited in full, for portions of it are condensed and repeated for emphasis in the closing sections of the poem:

> **Brome Grass** (Bromus Inermis): "No amount of cold will kill it. It **withstands** the summer suns. Water may stand on it for several weeks without apparent injury. The roots push through the soil, throwing up new plants continually. It **starts quicker** than other grasses in the spring. **Remains green** longer in the fall. **Flourishes under absolute neglect**.
>
> The end of winter:
> seeding/time. (35)

Like all other sections of the poem, the left-facing page of section seven displays a screened image from the McKenzie seed catalogue. This one merges praise gramineous with a faint image of harvested brome, western rye, and timothy sheaves. Continuing onto the right facing page, the screen holds a lengthy product description of brome grass that dominates the verbal and visual space of the page. The images of harvest and of ripe grass on the page contrast strongly with the clipped seasonal notice that says only "The end of winter: / seeding/time (35). In the second line of the portion just quoted, the oblique between "seeding" and "time" multiplies the meaning of the preceding line. Although the oblique traditionally blocks or impedes the flow of verse, Kroetsch omits any spaces between the three elements so they visually represent one word ("seeding/time"); by uniting all three elements he gives the expression the force usually seen in the popular conjunctive construction of "and/or." Three enjambed readings are thus possible. First, the line's sense may be scanned as "[t]he end of winter seeding"; second, it may be read as "[t]he end of winter seeding time." The interphrasal line break also allows a third reading, "[t]he end of winter time." The first two choices are minor variants of one another, so it serves clarity to say there are but two options: "[t]he end of winter seeding" or "[t]he end of winter." Seasonally, these two choices seem to contradict one another, for the first option would make it early to mid- September if it refers to the sowing of winter seed and grain crops. The latter choice, by contrast, refers to spring, the moment that the poem opens at section one. This apparent contradiction is, however, another aspect of the poem's doubleness.

The autumnal reading of the line belongs to the poem's subtext, to the images of harvest taken from the McKenzie seed catalogue, and the vernal reading only reinforces the larger time frame of the poem. From an agricultural perspective, both possibilities refer to sowing, but the two options fall at different seasonal moments. Figuratively, however, the version of the line—"The end of winter / seeding"—suggests an end to the ineffectual efforts of the poet in section five. It further suggests that the poet is simultaneously mature and ready to harvest his own words, and that he is engaged in an ongoing process of successful seeding because he has discovered in brome a cultivar that will flourish in both poor conditions and under neglect.

In place of this failed "winter / seeding" the brome grass entry—"[n]o amount of cold will kill it"—supplants the need for winter seeding (done to reduce the mortality rate of seed) with its hardiness and enduring vitality. The discovery of brome grass thus signals the poet's successful formation, and thus helps to explain the celebratory "piss-up" with Al Purdy where the latter's recitation of his own "Cariboo Horses" carries such verbal power its horses thunder "twice," "right straight through the dining room" (35). Part of becoming a poet involves finding one's own dialect, as the example of "Cariboo Horses" so superbly suggests. "Spring" in the context of section seven thus signals a successful wintering because the poet now begins to offer answers to each of his questions that appear in the poem's subsequent sections. Moreover, the brome grass stands not just as a symbol for Kroetsch as a poet, the description of the species stands as a symbol for the kind of voice he seeks in his own poetry.

In the sexual innuendo of the description of brome grass the poet also appears to regain some of the masculinity that was sacrificed in his fall from the horse in section one.[140] The grass can only be called virile because it "**starts quicker,**" and **Remains green** longer. In this regard, Kroetsch presents a symbol for the western Canadian poet that parallels the myth of northern hardihood mobilized by Cary. In Kroetsch's case, however, the poet lacks recourse to the notion of climatic amelioration, so a tension exists in the need to hybridize seed that will grow quickly, and, at the same time, that will produce a plant capable of enduring for as long a growing season as possible.

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[140] It should be noted that the entry about brome grass is the only one in the poem without a McKenzie catalogue number. An examination of McKenzie's catalogue from 1910, 1914, and 1915, however, shows that the catalogue's section on grasses is without any index or inventory numbers. The brome grass description in Kroetsch's poem matches exactly the one from the 1915 catalogue.

The poem's response to the tension between starting early and lasting longer lies in its found materials. Kroetsch observes that a certain arbitrariness arises from electing to use found material (Gunnars 57), but this remark implies that very little design informed the selection process for the quotations of the seed catalogue.[141] This observation seems an obvious one, yet it must be noted that "Seed Catalogue" would be a very different poem if its found elements were randomly selected. For example, under the heading for brome grass in the A.E. McKenzie catalogue can be found seeding suggestions for the product: "[f]ourteen pounds to the acre has almost become the standard quantity to sow alone. Used with an equal quantity of **Western Rye**, makes a fine mixture for pasture or hay" (59). It is worthwhile to note that the sowing guidelines comprise a single paragraph and occupy a place of equal prominence on the page, so it is clear that from among the ten paragraphs and three call outs on brome grass, Kroetsch selected with some care the paragraph quoted in "Seed Catalogue." When the entire entry for brome grass is viewed, the portions omitted from "Seed Catalogue" may be seen as rather telling absences.

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[141] Kroetsch says "that you use but don't control" the found elements in "Seed Catalogue" and "The Ledger" (Gunnars 57).

For example, the introductory material for the grass seed gives the historical context informing the reason why brome is listed in McKenzie's catalogue:

> With the **inclination** for **diversified farming**, the **rapid growth** of the **cattle industry** and the need of good **wholesome**, **appetizing** and **nutritious pasturage** and hay for farm stock we see **thousands** of **acres** of **prairie** which have been **basking in sunshine** for years now being **sown** to **Brome**. (59)

Much like the way that Abram's Plains depicts a transitional moment in the economic history of what is now Quebec, "Seed Catalogue" recalls a similar moment for Alberta. The Kroetsch farm, as Peter Thomas notes, "specialized in wheat and cattle," and during Kroetsch's boyhood his family cultivated up to two sections of land with horses, a very large acreage for the time (Robert Kroetsch and His Works 1). Seen in its historical context, the "home place" was, in fact, the Albertan equivalent of an estate. By omitting this fact, Kroetsch conceals the reality that there was no absence of prosperity on the family farm. He also conceals from his reader that the very presence of brome grass in the trade catalogue and, therefore, in the poem itself, testifies to the presence of an emergent beef cattle industry in Alberta, an industry that was fed by smooth brome grass.

Smooth brome, the *bromus inermis* of Kroetsch's poem, was introduced directly from Germany to Canada in about 1888 (Elliot and Clarke n. pag.). The species was established because its high protein content made it a desirable forage crop, so it quickly displaced native grasses such as green needle grass, tufted hair grass, native fescues, blue grama, Indian rice grass, June grass, needle and thread grass, and sand dropseed (Joyce 5). In the words of the A.E. McKenzie catalogue, "**thousands** of **acres** of **prairie**" were turned over to brome grass. Although the ecological and environmental consequences of this transition are only now being addressed, in the context of "Seed Catalogue" brome grass is presented almost as if it is *natural*.[142] In section ten, the testimonial from "Amie" enhances the perception that brome grass is a native species:

> 'Dear Sir,

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[142] See http://www.eman-rese.ca/eman/ecotools/protocols/terrestrial/exotics/exotic2.htm/for information on the Environment Canada Ecological Monitoring and Assessment Network. The EMAN network seeks to assess and monitor the impact of exotic species such as brome grass that have virtually destroyed biological

> The longest brome grass I remember seeing was one night in Brooks. We were on our way to the Calgary Stampede, and reached Brooks about 11 pm, perhaps earlier because there was still a movie on the drive in screen.
>
> We unloaded Cindy, and I remember tying her up to the truck box and the brome grass was up to her hips. We laid down in the back of the truck – on some grass I pulled by hand – and slept for about three hours, then drove into Calgary.' (47)

The source of this interpolated incident is unknown; certainly it is not drawn from a McKenzie's catalogue because the issues used to produce "Seed Catalogue" all date well before the advent of drive-in theatres. Whether Kroetsch created this section as a kind of apocryphal testimonial matters little because clear knowledge of the source will not change the fact that its ideological function resembles that of the picturesque aesthetic. This scene naturalizes and hides its conventions in a bucolic fashion, but, all the while it testifies, through "Cindy," to a cattle industry that is based on a profound disruption of Alberta's natural order. By deploying this sketch and by basing section seven of "Seed Catalogue" on brome grass,

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diversity in what were formerly grasslands and parklands.

Kroetsch evokes a nostalgic rural past, but both instances disclose the same reversible "convenient ambiguous signification" of natural landscape and property at work in the picturesque (Bermingham 14).

When Bermingham calls the picturesque an "ambiguous signification" she offers a model that applies well to Kroetsch's "convenient" elision of his family's prosperity. In the use of the adjective "ambiguous" Bermingham distills the fashion in which Kroetsch combines a McKenzie seed catalogue entry and a sketch involving brome grass to intimate that the species simply grows on its own everywhere, as if it were a native cultivar. No harm exists, perhaps, in either overstating or understating the origins of brome grass. However, Kroetsch creates a series of items that form a larger pattern that is rather deceptive.

First, in section one and in section ten, he hyperbolically creates a dualism in Alberta's climate—"Only the January snow. / Only the summer sun. / The home place: / a terrible symmetry" (13). He underlines the starkness of this environment in section four, by making privation the defining characteristic of his central Albertan home. Then, by making the northern hardihood of brome grass—"flourishes under absolute neglect"—his symbol of poetic development, Kroetsch embroiders an Albertan version of the self-made man or poet. Taken together, these two aspects add a complexity to the landscape of the poem because they balance an exaggeratedly false version of the autochthonous pioneering spirit against the vulnerability of a poet who openly pays a debt of gratitude to his mother, his father, and a group of friends like Al Purdy, Jim Bacque, and Rudy Wiebe. Neither version of the poet's formation and his relation to the home place cancels the other, however, so in the equipoise of these competing versions of the poet, Kroetsch turns often to parody, to cliché, as if to deflect scrutiny from the contradictory scene he creates. Ironically, Neuman does not censure such contradiction, but her argument helps to explain why Kroetsch so frequently attempts to escape from his own solipsism. That solipsism, as can be seen now, arises primarily because Kroetsch is so patently aware of the fact that he is manufacturing the myth of his own identity.

Section eight, by basing itself on the last will and testament of Henry Kroetsch, intensifies the role of history, particularly family and migrational history as Kroetsch's raw material for finding a "past" in which to live.[143] Tonally, "Seed Catalogue" evolves in this section, for where section four presented absence more as a problem here the meagreness of family history and the pioneering role taken by the Kroetsch family in the Battle River area begins to surface more as an element of local pride, especially in the action of "mapping the parkland" (41). This biophysical marker strongly contradicts the "terrible symmetry" that Kroetsch uses to describe the home place. It is likely that the apparent contradiction here owes to a doubleness of perspective. That is, Kroetsch appears to speak partly for his family, and so emphasizes the barrenness of Alberta in comparison to the environmental richness of the Ontario that his grandfather left, and he appears to speak partly for himself as he plumbs the barrenness to find regionally appropriate models for his local pride and evolving cultural formation as a poet.

Section nine intensifies the tension between old and new worlds, and it intensifies the sense of arbitrariness that subtends the entire mood of the poem. By means of the multiple choice answers that underscore how accidental life can be, Kroetsch issues a commentary on his own surprise, disbelief perhaps, that a) he is a poet b) that he is a poet with the odd family history he has c) that despite the fact he is a poet, he is capable of reaching beyond the solipsism of the poem.

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[143] Henry Kroetsch was the grandfather of Robert Kroetsch (Lassu and Kroetsch 319). "Uncle Freddy" was Fred Kroetsch, the brother of Paul Kroetsch, Robert Kroetsch's father (Lassu and Kroetsch 308).

IV

Section ten of "Seed Catalogue" is remarkable for the way that it approximates a frame structure by returning to the garden in which the poem opened. But by invoking the poem's closure in the garden and by intensifying the note of tenderness that appeared in the first section into one of loving devotion, the landscape that Kroetsch shapes in this section becomes a site and a scene that resolve the formative questions shaping the poem. The plenitude of this resolution owes much to the way in which the poet speaks unabashedly—without any of his former and habitual rhetoric of humour, pun, or melancholy—to his mother and so shows plainly his debt of love and, finally, his cultivated maturity of voice:

> Your sweet peas
> climbing the staked
> chicken wire,
> climbing the stretched binder twine by
> the front porch

taught me the smell
of morning, the grace
of your tired
hands, the strength
of a noon sun, the
color of prairie grass

taught me the smell
of my sweating armpits

(45)

These lines respond directly to the poem's final question—"*How/do you grow a garden*?"—but with no equivocation or digression. The certainty shown owes itself to the rare moment of transcendence that emerges in the vision of the sweet peas reaching heavenward, accompanied by the power of a memory freighted with the "smell / of morning." The homophone—mourning—of this line recalls the graveyard scene of section one and reiterates the loving tone found there.

Kroetsch also transforms his free verse by lengthening the one line—"climbing the stretched binder twine by"—to enact the sweet pea's phototropic reach up the front porch. This portion also powerfully displays anaphora, Kroetsch's favourite device, in the repeated word "climbing" that begins two parallel lines, "climbing the staked . . .

climbing the stretched . . . " (45). By use of the repeated hard *c* of "climbing" and the sibilant stress of "staked" and "stretched" Kroetsch creates a profusion of like sounds that strike a noble accentual cadence of praise to his mother.

Kroetsch also elevates his diction to form nearly numinous clustered phrases—" . . . the grace / of your tired / hands"—to acknowledge the cost, the stigmata of fatigue earned in the garden and home, of his mother's parenting labour. These two images of delicate endurance—the hands of the poet's mother and the sweet peas—by sheer virtue of their successful growth and creativity—show that the poet has answered his own question by speaking or writing with simplicity, ordinariness, and beauty.

The lines that close this passage of prosodic loveliness contrast in a jolting fashion, but their devotional candour—"taught me the smell / of my sweating armpits"—confesses to the role Kroetsch's mother played in raising him to maturity. This passage also employs the patterns of repetition—"taught me the smell / of morning . . . taught me the smell / of my sweating armpits"—that dignify the overall sweep of this entire unit of verse. By showing some of his best poetry in the closing section of "Seed Catalogue" Kroetsch manifests the great strength free verse claims in thematizing a proximity to lived experience, to what Lefebvre calls the "affective kernel" of our relationship with place.

Kroetsch's love for his "home place" and for his parents, especially his mother, is not, however, altogether ideologically innocent. In "Seed Catalogue," the poet's mother and her garden occupy roles that recall Cary's depiction of Wolfe and his use of the picturesque. Differences do occur in the depictions of Wolfe and Kroetsch's mother. Certainly, the poet's mother is no military hero, and Kroetsch's tribute to his mother invests his poem with far more poignancy than Cary manages in his descriptions of Wolfe's death. However, a rough parallel exists between Wolfe and the poet's mother because her death is tragic yet beautiful in that it engenders such tenderness in her son. In addition, she appears to win a maternal victory when the poet says that her sweet peas taught him "the smell / of morning" and "the / color of prairie grass" (45). These contrasting images possess an ideological function, however, for they combine to produce something akin to the picturesque aesthetic of _Abram's Plains_. Although it is too much to say that Kroetsch fully achieves a picturesque aesthetic, the juxtaposition of "sweet peas" and "prairie grass" effect the reversible "convenient ambiguous signification" of natural landscape and property that Bermingham identifies in the picturesque (14). Moreover, Kroetsch's remembrance of the past signified by his mother's garden is also especially picturesque in its effect (Bermingham 70), so it serves an ideological role in the poem because the "tired / hands" of the poet's mother signify the labour involved in the settling and working the land of the Kroetsch home quarter section. Moreover, by underscoring the "grace" of his mother's hands, Kroetsch aesthetically and morally disguises the act of claiming the land because he, like Cary, invokes Locke's theory of property, which makes ownership of land lie with the person who "mixed his *Labour* with [it]" (329).

Place, thus, is usually a private possession, and topographical poetry typically displays this reality. Cary betrayed his sensibilities, even if inadvertently, concerning property when he celebrated Quebec's Aboriginal past by speaking idealistically of "two great tribes"—the Ottawa and the Ojibway (AP *26*)—and simultaneously justified the suppression of those peoples by contrasting their barbarous nature with picturesque vignettes of agrarian and villatic progress. Kroetsch, likewise, unconsciously perhaps, underscores the fact that Alberta's Aboriginals lived on the land, but did not possess it:

> February 14, 1976. Rudy, you
> took us there: to the Oldman River
> Lorna & Byrna, Ralph & Steve and me
> you showed us where
> the Bloods surprised the Crees
> in the next coulee / surprised
> them to death. (33)

Even though he declares "Rudy: Nature thou art" (33) at the close of this section, Kroetsch appears unaware that his poem works, like Cary's, to neutralize the separation of Aboriginals from their land by privileging an aesthetic very similar to the picturesque and which, therefore, poetically asserts property rights.

The ideological elements of the poem certainly qualify its aesthetic achievement, yet, in "Seed Catalogue" Kroetsch's sense of place shows itself to be an almost sacred thing, especially in the way he prizes voice over "great black steel lines of / fiction" (32). Attributed to Rudy Wiebe, these words are meant to jibe Kroetsch; Wiebe is also made to say "no song can do that," that is, make a "giant / artifact" of prairie literature. Kroetsch, of course, in his "piss up" celebrates speech and the immediacy of poetry when Purdy gallops "Cariboo Horses"

(35). By throwing Wiebe's words back at him "'No song can do that'" with the heaviest of ironic reversals, Kroetsch shows that the riddle of "Seed Catalogue" is also a quest to achieve the "affective kernel" of what only song can do: give voice to the "grace" of his mother's "tired / hands" and show how to "*grow a poet*," if only great "'black steel lines of fiction'" could do that.

V

At its core, "Seed Catalogue" is a very simple poem. It poses but one riddle: "*How do you grow a poet*?" The solution presented in this argument underscores the *topos* of topographical poetry by saying "plant him; ground him." This response serves to highlight the significance of the appositional structure Kroetsch creates between "I" and "N.E. 17-42-16-W4th Meridian." This kind of equation, like the suggested answer to the riddle, however, lacks the circuitousness that defines Kroetsch and his poetry. Kroetsch acknowledges his own predilection in this exchange with Gunnars:

> KG: Shirley Neuman, in an essay on your poetry, says that circumlocution is one of your abiding characteristics as a poet. But if you were to get straight to the point, without any

> circumlocution, would there be a point to get to, or is not the circumlocution the point itself?
>
> RK: I think circumlocution is the point. That's partly what you mean when you talk about the ongoing poem that never ends. . . .
>
> KG: Are you then writing this poem with your life?
>
> RK: That's right. I think life itself is a circumloction. (Gunnars 55-56)

Although self-understanding, as displayed in this interview, is necessarily a limited and changing thing, Kroetsch demonstrates remarkable insight here into his own methods and commitments as a poet. Part of this commitment shows up in section six, which is one of the most cryptic parts of "Seed Catalogue":

> *How do you grow a poet?*
>
> This is a prairie road.
> This road is the shortest distance
> between nowhere and nowhere.
> This road is a poem.
>
> Just two miles up the road
> you'll find a porcupine
> dead in the ditch.

It was trying to cross the road.

As for the poet himself
we can find no record
of his having traversed
the land/in either direction

no trace of his coming
or going/only a scarred
page, a spoor of wording
a reduction to mere black

and white/a pile of rabbit
turds . . . (33)

Read in light of Kroetsch's conversation with Gunnars, this passage becomes a commentary on the futility of taking the direct route in a poem. Kroetsch suggests that direct routes in poetry travel between "nowhere and nowhere" and leave no enduring sign of their existence. It is true that these words tempt one to read them *sous rature*. But to place what is merely scatological into a Derridean grammatology where the poet's words, like evanescent "rabbit / turds," cannot ultimately testify to any presence but themselves strains a poem that was written in 1977, prior to Kroetsch's immersion in deconstructive theory. Rather than taking them as a deconstructive gesture, one should read these lines as Kroetsch's warning against straightforward answers. If the meaning in his "spoor of wording" remains oblique, then it suggests that Kroetsch means to write poetry, not answer his own questions directly. Any poetic uncertainty betrayed in this passage does not foreclose on future poetry; in Kroetsch's case, it appears to ensure that future work will issue from his home place, from the place where he is grounded. Indeed, Kroetsch's final note in *Seed Catalogue* promises that "Seed Catalogue" is part of a "continuing poem" (73). The strong sense of determination in this note issues, perhaps, from the maturity the poet evidences at the end of section ten. The promise of future work is not so very different from the optimistic future that Cary sees from his own horizon at the close of *Abram's Plains*. Both poems owe their outlook to their depiction of their respective environments.

The way in which seasonal contrast functions in "Seed Catalogue" is complex, however, and strikingly different from that of *Abram's Plains*. In "Seed Catalogue" this bleakness forms part of the poem's regional appeal, its representational realism, but the starkness serves also to conceal the ideological function of the poem's landscape. Kroetsch's "terrible symmetry" is both an aesthetic and an ideology. Kroetsch's stark depiction of the "home place" works, therefore, toward the same goal of nearly all topographical poetry; that is, it differentiates the rural prairie locale and experience from other parts of Canada and from other places of putatively higher cultural standing, all the while evincing an ironic local pride. Climatic severity serves also to underline the hardiness of seeds, of poets, of gardens, of people that define Kroetsch's prairies. History serves much the same end, for, through the topographical poem's device of incidental meditation, Kroetsch eschews narrative but still manages to build a series of tableaux that combine local and world history to reinforce the distinctive western Canadian identity that "Seed Catalogue" cultivates.

The answer to growing a garden, as well as to growing a poet, lies in hybridized seeds that are adapted to a northern growing season. This process is rather different from what Cary envisioned: in Kroetsch's perspective seed is changed and adapted to suit our northern climate; in Cary's, our northern climate is changed by the process of cultivating seed. Thus, although the processes are nearly contradictory, both involve myths of identity that are virtually identical: the northern climate of Canada defines its citizens. Although this similarity between the two poems may appear to be a forced atavism that hearkens to the national collective unconscious, Canada's poets of place inescapably turn not so much inwardly as outwardly to define us.

CONCLUSION

> Purdy's recent Collected Poems (1986) shows him a major C. poet by any standards. His melding of the sense of history in a new country suddenly grown old in its feelings with an awareness of place as a visual reality has enlightened younger poets, so that a kind of geohistorical trad. has come into being, represented by writers like John Newlove (b. 1938), Sid Marty (b. 1944), Andrew Suknazki (sic) (b. 1942) and, perhaps, most notably, that fine rural poet of the Maritimes, Alden Nowlan (1933-83). (Guy Sylvestre 163)

From the entry on "Canadian Poetry" in the New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetics (1993), this quotation serves as a useful benchmark by which to conclude the current study because it asserts that a kind of Canadian poetry—the "geohistorical"—possesses almost no tradition at all since it only arises within, and as a result of, Purdy's writing. Because Sylvestre wrote within the limitations of an encyclopedia entry he almost certainly could not completely unfold his argument; yet, because his unusual term "geohistorical" obviously serves as a synonym for *topographical* it points to this larger genre of poetry and, therefore, to a much longer tradition of poetry in Canada.[144]

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[144] It should be noted that Sylvestre is no amateur with respect to Canadian poetry. His work was something of a tradition in the University of Toronto Quarterly, where he published an annual review of poetry from 1958 to 1968.

Although one wishes that Alex Preminger and T.V.F Brogan, the co-editors of the New Princeton Encyclopedia, had glossed "geohistorical" with the word *topographical* and then cross-referenced Sylvestre's entry to the one on topographical and descriptive poetry, such frustrated expectations only indicate the need to reiterate and synthesize the central points of this dissertation.

In this study's first chapter, Johnson's definition of topographical poetry formed the basis of the discussion. Because the nature of the genre and its purpose lie at the centre of this study, Johnson's definition must be revisited. Speaking of Cooper's Hill (1642), by Denham, Johnson argued as follows:

> [h]e seems to have been, at least among us, the author of a species of composition that may be denominated *local poetry*, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape, to be poetically described, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection or incidental

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Sylvestre also wrote numerous authoritative reference texts for Canadian literature, in particular, see his collaborative work with Conron and Klinck, Canadian Writers.

> meditation. (50)

To situate this definition within the context of Canadian poetry and contemporary criticism, however, I recast it so that it describes

> a *genre* that may be denominated local poetry, of which the fundamental subject is some particular *Canadian landscape*, which deploys *referentiality*, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by *history* or incidental meditation.

This second version of Johnson's explanation is indented to accentuate the parallel between the two definitions; moreover, the parallel foregrounds what Sylvestre and the New Princeton Encyclopedia exclude: the fact that Canadian topographical poetry participates in the larger historical tradition of the genre in Britain and in all the national literatures in which local poetry is written. When viewed as a national inflection of a world tradition, Canadian topographical poetry becomes perfectly understandable, and so it can be described as a genre that primarily refers to Canadian landscape and history. However, the Canadian variety of the genre gains its uniqueness not because its poets write out of lived experiences, out of what Lefebvre calls the "affective kernel" of represented and real places (42), but because its poets write from the unique place and history of northern North America and Canada. To Lefebvre, that kernel is equivalent to "bed, bedroom, dwelling, house" or to "square, church, graveyard," and it "embraces the loci of *passion*, of *action* and of *lived situations*" (42; my emphasis). This reminder helps explain why the "sense of history" and "awareness of place as a visual reality" that Sylvestre gives to Purdy possess such gravity (despite how flat the description seems). Thus, a poem like Purdy's "The Country North of Belleville" (1965) locates passion and a sort of graveyard in its incantatory topology of

> Bush land scrub land –
>   Cashel Township and Wollaston
> Elzevir McClure and Dungannon
> green lands of Weslemkoon Lake
> where a man might have some
>   opinion of what beauty
> is and none deny him
>   for miles –
> . . . .
> A country of quiescence and still distance
> a lean land
> . . . .
> Hershel Monteagle and Faraday

lakeland rockland and hill country
a little adjacent to where the world is
a little north of where the cities are and
sometime
we may go back there
                    to the country of our defeat
Wollaston Elzevir and Dungannon
and Weslemkoon lake land
where the high townships of Cashel
                    McClure and Marmora once were —
(Purdy 61-62)

The strength of Purdy's poem lies not merely in its ability to present a region as a "visual reality" (Sylvestre 163) but also in its ability to represent the past and present experience of living in and visiting land that took and takes possession of its people more so than it was ever successfully landscaped by human efforts, be they agricultural or poetic. Topographical poetry thus arises from the fact that human existence is always emplaced, and the genre's elements—landscape, referentiality, and history—stem from and contain the paradigmatic kernels of experience in Canada.

The weighty continuity and disjunction that Purdy creates between his present and the past in "The Country

North of Belleville" suggest the larger literary tradition involving previous and present generations of poets who sought and seek to describe, reflect on, and even define Canadian landscape and history on the basis of their experiences. Whyte certainly saw this continuity when he joined Homage with Kelsey's "Now Reader Read." The argument advanced in chapter two of this study, however, does not link the poems of Kelsey and Whyte simply because the contemporary poem makes an intertext (or, as per Bentley, a "pretext" ["Set Forth" 29 n23]) of the earlier poem. Rather, the two poems belong together by virtue of their genre. It will be remembered, however, that the generical scheme advanced was not a container and contents model, but, rather, a performative one that emphasizes the work performed by the genre. Understood performatively, the genre of topographical poetry gains diachronic unity, so much so that poems as dissimilar as Cary's Abram's Plains and Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue" perform the same work of shaping their respective regions into a distinctive landscape, which, in turn, reflects on the experience and identity of the people who inhabit those regions.

Although he uses the expression "poems of place" (257), a turn of phrase where *topographical poetry* serves better, Russell Brown is worth citing at length because he so clearly sees an early and continuous tradition of writing such poetry in Canada:

> Beginning early—with such poets as Oliver Goldsmith, Joseph Howe, Alexander McLachlan—writers in Canada have written poems that were both long and concerned with the place in which they found themselves. Even the Confederation poets, who didn't create many long works, wrote their important poems of place—Roberts' "Tantramar Revisited," Carman's "Low Tide on the Grand Pré," Lampman's "At the Long Sault"—using a longer form than usual. And obviously the connection between the long poem and the poem of place continues in the work of our twentieth century poetic leviathan, Pratt, who in "Towards the Last Spike," lays poetic tracks across the entire country, an entire continent, claiming it as his own territory. ("On Not Saying" 257-58)

The fact that Sylvestre omits from his survey what Brown includes (a lengthy, nearly uninterrupted tradition) and that Sylvestre includes what Brown does not (for example, in Purdy's North of Summer [1967], "poems of place" without equal) points to the rich and complex tradition of Canadian topographical poetry.

As noted in the introduction to this study, our settler or colonial years, from the fall of Quebec in 1759 to Confederation, and the period from the 1960s through to the present have been especially rich in topographical poetry. The poems examined in this study—"Now Reader Read," Homage, Abram's Plains, and "Seed Catalogue"—indicate the breadth and promise of future work that deliberately pairs poems to examine the work they perform in representing the landscape and history of Canada. For example, Canada (1806) by Cornwall Bayley and "Towards the Last Spike" (1952) by E.J. Pratt form a compatible pair of poems by which to examine two representations of Canada as nation: the earlier a nascent glimpse, the later a study in the history that grew from Bayley's version.

Another opportunity for connecting poems on the basis of their genre and subject matter exists in Adam Hood Burwell's Talbot Road (1818) and Douglas Barbour's A Poem as Long as the Highway (1971). The Rising Village (1825) by Oliver Goldsmith and Calgary this growing graveyard (1987) by Aritha Van Herk both display similar commitments, albeit with significant differences in poetic style, to depicting a vision of home. Such examples, of course, only illustrate, but do not exhaust, the potential for future inquiry along the lines shown in this study's treatment of

Kelsey and Whyte, as well as Cary and Kroetsch.

In some cases, poems suggest a parallel examination because they both represent a specific sub-type of the topographical genre. One of the most enticing comparisons of this type can be found in Marlatt's Steveston (1974; reissued 2001) and Standish O'Grady's The Emigrant (1841). Both poems treat their respective places as occasions to explore the tension between home and homelessness. In this regard, both poems depict an aspect of Canada's literary production that remains constant: our country is one populated primarily by immigrants whose relationship to Canada's terrain consistently manifests itself in poems that represent an ambivalent relationship to landscape, and, in turn, these poems use landscape to image the ambivalence felt by their authors. The ambivalence expressed in these two poems, however, also displays another aspect of Lefebvre's "affective kernel," for both poems brim with the "homing instinct" that Marlatt gives the salmon of Steveston.

The use of "instinct" suggests that something fundamental underwrites the habit of writing topographical poetry. Just what motivates the continuity of such writing in Canada remains patient of many explanations; however, for the purpose of this study, the question of why Canadian poets choose the topographical genre is a moot one. Rather, the goal of this study lies with the kind of work that Gerhart outlines, that is, with using the concept of genre diagnostically and heuristically to formulate hypotheses, not merely to classify, but to enable readers to recognize a text "for all that it is" (372). Too little, then, is said when critics comment on either the brevity of Canada's poetic tradition or when they note that our tradition involves a certain fascination with place.

A topographical reading practice thus interrogates and corrects Sylvestre's description of Canada's poetic tradition as one belonging to a "new country suddenly grown old in its feelings" (163). Where Sylvestre's use of "suddenly" implies a rapid or unexpected emergence of "feelings" for the "place" of Canada, a topographical approach to Canada's poetic tradition finds an old tradition, one stretching to Kelsey's seventeenth-century journey into northern North America, of poets simultaneously exploring land, of shaping landscape, and sifting for the "affective kernel" of the feelings that make place into home.

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